

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

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# Annual Report

## Children's Services

### 2020-2021

**Children's Services, Government of Alberta | Children's Services 2020–2021 Annual Report**

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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 of the 20 ministries.

The annual report of the Government of Alberta contains ministers' accountability statements, the consolidated financial statements of the province and a comparison of actual performance results to desired results set out in the government's strategic plan, previously published in one volume entitled *Measuring Up* report.

**This annual report of the Ministry of Children's Services contains the minister's accountability statement, the financial information of the ministry and 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.**

**Each ministry Annual Report 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, 2021, was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act* and the government's accounting policies. All of the government's policy decisions as at June 3, 2021 with material economic or fiscal implications of which I am aware have been considered in the preparation of this report.

< original signed by >

*Honourable Rebecca Schulz*  
*Minister of Children's Services*

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## Message from the Minister



As the Government of Alberta and the Ministry of Children's Services continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, I am so proud of the dedication of ministry staff and the determination and resilience of the people of this province. I'm pleased to share this report highlighting our accomplishments in one of the most challenging years in recent history.

Early in April 2020, Family Resource Networks launched across the province, delivering high-quality prevention and early intervention supports to families. Public Health restrictions prevented them from physically opening their doors to the public, so they quickly pivoted to deliver services remotely – online and by telephone, to ensure supports were available for those who needed them.

In July, the Alberta government and Government of Canada announced the signing of the re-negotiated bilateral agreement that provided an investment of \$45.4 million for early learning and child care in Alberta for an additional year. We renegotiated how we used this funding so that more families would benefit, not just a select few. We made child care more affordable and accessible for parents by increasing subsidy rates, and we helped child care providers create more child care spaces in communities where there aren't enough.

After the first child care consultation in over a decade, we used feedback from Alberta's parents, child care providers, operators, educators and others to guide us in making amendments to child care legislation. These changes made improvements to quality and safety in licensed child care programs so parents can be assured their kids are safe and getting high-quality support for their growth and development. They also reduced red tape so providers could spend less time on paperwork and more time caring for children and meeting the needs of children and families.

We also made changes to legislation to modernize and simplify the adoption process for Albertans, giving them more tools to find a child to join their family. Amendments to post-adoption legislation also made it easier for adult adoptees and birth families to help them find one another.

Across the ministry, we worked to reduce red tape and find ways to work more efficiently. For example, we launched a new online child care subsidy application system that makes it easier and more secure for parents to apply for child care subsidy funding. Tools and innovations like this one enhance government services and make it easier for Albertans to get what they need are essential.

I am honoured to continue leading the important work of this ministry. I look forward to the year ahead with hope, enthusiasm and the highest level of confidence in the leadership of this government, Children's Services staff and Executive Team.

< original signed by >

*Honourable Rebecca Schulz  
Minister of Children's Services*

## Management's Responsibility for Reporting

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

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

Responsibility for the integrity and objectivity of the accompanying ministry financial information and performance results for the ministry rests with the Minister of Children'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 2020-23 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:

- Reliability – information used in applying performance measure methodologies agrees with the underlying source data for the current and prior years' results.
- Understandability – performance measure methodologies and results are presented clearly.
- Comparability – methodologies for performance measure preparation are applied consistently for the current and prior years' results.
- Completeness – outcomes, performance measures and related targets match those included in the ministry's *Budget 2020*.

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

- provide reasonable assurance that transactions are properly authorized, executed in accordance with prescribed legislation and regulations, and properly recorded so as to maintain accountability of public money;
- provide information to manage and report on performance;
- safeguard the assets and properties of the province under ministry administration;
- provide Executive Council, the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Children'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 >

*Sherri Wilson*  
*Deputy Minister of Children's Services*  
*June 3, 2021*

# Results Analysis

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## Ministry Overview

Children's Services' mandate focuses on the safety and well-being of children and youth. The ministry is committed to helping build strong, resilient families by providing a continuum of supports and services from early learning and childhood development, including child care, through to early intervention supports, intervention services and transitions to adulthood. This includes services to children at home and in care, adoption and post-intervention services.

Information provided in this annual report is aligned with the strategic direction of the Government of Alberta. This annual report highlights results achieved from delivery of key strategies and performance measurements described in the Children's Services 2020-23 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.

To achieve its mandate, the ministry focused on achieving three outcomes:

**Outcome One:** Children and youth are protected;

**Outcome Two:** The growth and development of children are supported through accessible, affordable and quality child care; and

**Outcome Three:** The well-being, resiliency and cultural connections of children, youth and families are nurtured and enhanced.

Children's Services accomplished these outcomes through the work of the department shown below.

### Organizational Structure

In 2020-21, the ministry underwent a number of organizational changes to support the delivery of government priorities and commitments, and to help ensure effective and efficient organization of divisions and branches.

The Transition and Intervention Supports division was created to consolidate programs for early intervention and prevention, youth transitioning to adulthood and statutory services.

The former Policy, Innovation and Indigenous Connections division was expanded to include responsibility for corporate and strategic services, such as accommodations, security, and strategic planning. The new Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services division is responsible for strengthening Indigenous partnerships and ministry support services and policy advice.

The Corporate Finance office was created to support financial accountabilities.

### Operational Overview

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 mandated under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, the *Drug-Endangered Children Act* and the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act*. Child Intervention Delivery provides services to children and youth who are or may be at risk of being abused, neglected or otherwise in need of intervention. Child intervention services are only 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*.

The division provides supports to children and families across the province, so children have what they need to remain safely at home whenever possible. 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.

In Alberta, children, youth and their families receive services through one of the 86 provincial offices or 19 Delegated First Nation Agencies (DFNAs) in communities across the province. Child Intervention Delivery maintains a collaborative relationship with the DFNAs and Indigenous Services Canada to support on-reserve child intervention service delivery. Additionally, Child Intervention Delivery works with Métis stakeholders including the Metis Settlements General Council and the Métis Nation of Alberta to support the needs of Métis children and families involved with child intervention.

### ***Transition and Intervention Supports***

The Transition and Intervention Supports division is responsible for early intervention and prevention, youth transitioning to adulthood and statutory services. The division leads the ministry's negotiations with Indigenous stakeholders, particularly on matters arising from the Federal Act - *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*. The division also provides strategic procurement, workforce learning and development, data and performance analytics support services, and technology supports to service delivery areas.

### ***Early Childhood Services***

The Early Childhood Services division is responsible for legislation, policy and programs related to early learning and child care, including oversight and implementation of the *Child Care Licensing Act*, which became the *Early Learning and Child Care Act* on February 1, 2021.

The Early Childhood Services division supports access to affordable and high-quality child care options for families and administers the Child Care Subsidy program to support low income families with the cost of child care. The Early Childhood Services division works closely with key stakeholders in the child care sector to enhance quality in licensed programs. The division also oversees licensing and monitoring of licensed child care programs, child care staff certification and provides funding to support the recruitment and retention of a qualified child care workforce.

### ***Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services***

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

The division provides policy advice, analysis, and tracking and coordination to support teams across the department in taking a lead role on broader cross-divisional or cross-government policy initiatives. The division is responsible for the delivery of accommodation services and corporate security and provides critical support to ministry worksites and offices in the event of emergencies. The division also leads the development of ministry business plans, annual reports, strategic plans, and red tape reduction.

### ***Corporate Finance***

The Corporate Finance office leads the development of the ministry's budget and provides financial advice and support related to planning and forecasting. It oversees the preparation and implementation of ministry financial statements, financial compliance and accountability, policy and internal audits, and financial processes and policies.

### ***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***

Under the "One HR" approach, Human Resources' service delivery has been consolidated within the Public Service Commission. Each department is supported by a dedicated portfolio director and business partners who provide strategic advice, talent development, engagement and internal communications. This dedicated team connects people leaders to common human resource services such as recruitment, classification, policy development and analytics through service centres within the broader human resource system.

### ***Legal Services***

Justice and Solicitor General 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 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 in the Past Year

The following table represents Children's Services key achievements in 2020-21, including progress toward commitments in the 2020-23 Government of Alberta Strategic Plan.

The <i>Early Learning and Child Care Act</i> came into force on February 1, 2021	The updated act and Regulation introduced changes that reduce red tape for program operators and improve quality and child safety in all child care settings.
Improved child care affordability for low-income parents	Children's Services simplified the subsidy model and increased subsidies for families. The new subsidy provides a higher benefit to families most in need, helping them to access high-quality licensed child care so they can work or attend school.
Created new child care spaces in areas of need	44 capacity building grants were awarded totaling \$10.2 million to increase the number of child care spaces and child care options by up to 1600 spaces, including overnight care, in areas of need.
Launched 70 Family Resource Networks	A network of agencies was launched to provide a continuum of high-quality prevention and early intervention services and supports.
Strengthened relationships and developed collaborative partnerships with Indigenous communities	In 2020-21, the Children's Services established the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Tribal Council (G4)-CS Protocol Table under the Government of Alberta-G4 Protocol Agreement. Work also continued to advance with the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) through the MNA-CS Sub-Table.
Supported adoptive families	On January 1, 2021, the <i>Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act</i> was amended to improve access to adoption information. The Adoption Regulation was also amended so that adoptive parents could publicize profiles in order to enhance matching opportunities with birth parents.
Service Improvement Award recipient for reducing red tape	Children's Services was recognized with a Red Tape Reduction Service Improvement Award in 2020 for its efforts to improve service delivery through digitization which included implementation of the Child Care Subsidy Online Application and Case Connect initiatives.

## Discussion and Analysis of Results

### Red Tape Reduction

The Ministry of Children's Services is committed to the ongoing review of programs and services to ensure the best possible outcomes for Albertans. As part of this ongoing review, the ministry is making life easier for hard-working Albertans and job creators by reducing regulatory requirements by one-third by 2023, and eliminating administrative burden through more efficient processes. This will improve service delivery for Albertans; foster economic growth, innovation and competitiveness; create a strong and attractive investment climate; and make Alberta one of the freest and fastest moving economies in North America.

On May 1, 2019, Children's Services had 10,079 regulatory requirements. In 2020-21, Children's Services advanced Red Tape Reduction initiatives that have had tangible, positive impacts on children, youth and families within Alberta. By the end of March 2021, the ministry had reduced 2,384 regulatory requirements, achieving a cumulative red tape reduction of 23.6 per cent.

### Digital Transformation

The online Child Care Staff Certification application launched in summer 2020, making it easier for child care providers to apply for certification. Previously, potential early childhood educators had to print, fill in and submit applications by mail, fax or email and Children's Services staff manually entered each application into the system. The new online certification application is secure and easy to use, saves time for applicants and achieves department efficiencies. Certification is required before individuals can work in a licensed child care program and be eligible for government wage top ups. Making the process more efficient means Albertans can start working, and earning higher wages, sooner.

### Smart Regulation

Children's Services reviewed the *Child Care Licensing Act* to enable work towards a transformed model of child care delivery in Alberta. The legislative review gathered input from stakeholders to create a streamlined and easier-to-navigate, safe, high-quality child care system. The review addressed and identified efficiencies related to access, accountability, safety and quality within child care, while reducing red tape and regulatory burden on operators and child care educators. The *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and Regulation came into force on February 1, 2021 with a focus on ensuring safe, high-quality child care and reducing red tape to become more efficient and cost effective. Child care transformation reduced regulatory requirements by 47 per cent within the child care program.

### Actions that Support the Priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

#### Key Priority 1:

Supporting job creation

#### Objective 3:

Reducing red tape

- In 2020-21, Children's Services reduced regulatory requirements by 2,384 representing a 23.6 per cent reduction. The reductions are primarily from forms, guidelines, statutes and regulations.
- Albertans wanting to work in a licensed child care program can now apply for certification using multiple browsers and any mobile device through the online Early Childhood Educator Certification Application using a MyAlberta Digital ID.

## Improved Service Delivery

### *Child Advocacy Centres*

Children's Services introduced a new funding allocation model and three-year funding cycle for Child Advocacy Centres. By transitioning from annual funding grants to a three-year funding model, red tape and administrative burden was reduced. This streamlining reduces wait times when applying for grants, stabilizes funding and reduces the time spent on grant administration and reporting, which allows organizations to focus on delivering programs and services. In addition, reporting was standardized across Children's Services, Health and Justice and Solicitor General and further simplified by electronically extracting data from a client management system. As a result, resources can be redirected to serving children and youth.

### *Adoptions*

The *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* came into effect on January 1, 2021 and enables the release of identifying biological background information to an adopted person or their descendants. In addition, amendments to the Adoption Regulation allowed the publication of an advertisement by a licensed adoption agency to publicize the profiles of prospective adoptive parents, according to prescribed regulations. These changes make it easier for families to navigate adoptions, increase accountability of adoption agencies, and improve processes for prospective adoptive parents. This also reduces regulatory burden by allowing the adoptive family to be presented online to birth parents wishing to place their child for adoption and enhances their matching opportunities.

#### **Actions that Support the Priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan**

##### **Key Priority 2:**

Making life better for Albertans

##### **Objective 3:**

Supporting Albertans most in need

- In 2020-21, Children's Services developed a collaborative response with Alberta Health Services, Justice and Solicitor General and local law enforcement to meet statutory obligations to protect children and youth from imminent danger and harm, and to fulfill the role of the province as legal guardians for children and youth in care.

#### **Outcome One: Children and youth are protected**

The ministry is strengthening the child intervention system to ensure the healthy development of children, youth and families and ultimately reduce the total number of children in care. The ministry works with families, Indigenous leaders, communities and other partners to reduce the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth receiving services. Nurturing connections to their families, culture, spirituality and communities, supports the emotional well-being of children and youth.

#### **Key Objectives**

**1.1 Improve child intervention practices by implementing safety-oriented, evidence-based, culturally appropriate approaches and models, which include the phased implementation of an improved intake process, which provides specific tools to enhance the assessment of risk and safety.**

Children's Services understands the importance of early engagement with families and communities as it equips staff to be better able to understand the child's needs and learn where natural supports exist. Children's Services is committed to keeping the child's connections to family and significant people in their life as a way to promote lifelong safety and well-being.



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## Child Intervention COVID-19 Response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, child intervention practitioners continued the important work of keeping children safe and secure to meet their legislated mandate, including completing in-person home visits and assessments. Face to face contacts continued and occurred within the required timeframes, and completed virtually when necessary. Staff safety was supported by supplying appropriate personal protective equipment, providing safety and practice guidance, and supporting the use of technology when necessary and possible through virtual means. Technology and tools were leveraged to support staff, including Case Connect, virtual and remote videoconferencing applications and equipping frontline staff with laptops and mobile phones.

The ministry worked closely with other social serving ministries, including Community and Social Services, Alberta Health, and Seniors and Housing and Alberta Health Services to leverage opportunities for regional implementation and compliance with public health measures and facilitate consistent information. Ongoing collaboration with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services supported alternative housing for children and youth in congregate care providing additional, flexible supports and funding to family-based caregivers and modifying licensing requirements. This included the expanded use of alternate child care options such as banking relief and respite days; using recreation camp and vacation allowances to creatively support children and youth through online and virtual options; ensuring children had appropriate supports for online learning; and ensuring child maintenance invoices were processed in a timely manner. Additionally, Children's Services provided temporary caregivers to children in care with the equivalent amount of the one-time increase all families received in May 2020 from the Canada Child Benefit.

The ministry engaged and mobilized service delivery partners and stakeholders - including Delegated First Nations Agencies, contract agencies, Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, foster care representative organizations and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate. The ministry leveraged the networks and capacities of these organizations to assist with the development and implementation of policy and practice guidance, information dissemination and communication. Administrative processes were modified to prevent interruption in services, including foster caregiver payments, new agreements, and Child Intervention Records Checks.

## Signs of Safety

Signs of Safety is an evidence-based practice approach that focuses on collaborative relationships between child intervention professionals and family members in situations where children are in danger of harm. Signs of Safety supports sustainable safety planning, culturally sensitive practice, and lifelong connections for children, youth and families.

In 2020-21, the ministry continued the ongoing implementation of Signs of Safety. This approach continues to be embedded into forms, processes, practice and the Child Intervention Practitioner Training, which is mandatory for all frontline practitioners to become delegated caseworkers. Advanced Signs of Safety training was developed in 2020 and is being piloted as part of the learning pathway for all child intervention practitioners and leaders; the pilot will be completed in 2021.

The Child Intervention Workflow Project integrates Signs of Safety topics and approaches with child intervention practices consistently across the province. Integration of a Signs of Safety approach from intake to the closure of a file ensures that families receive the same services regardless of where they reside in the province. By incorporating Signs of Safety at intake, child intervention practitioners collect more comprehensive information up front, improve identification of children who need child intervention services, and families receive more appropriate levels of service and supports in response. In January 2021, an intake roll-out strategy began across the province through additions to leadership and practitioner guides, training, and ongoing evaluation of intake processes.

### Policy and Practice Enhancements

The Child Intervention Enhancement Policy Manual guides the work of a child intervention practitioner. In 2020-21, the Child Intervention Enhancement Policy Manual was amended through regularly scheduled bi-annual policy updates. Bi-annual updates are specific, issue-related changes developed and released on a regular basis to address emerging program and process changes. The amendments include updated terminology, enhanced provincially-consistent practices, streamlined internal processes and alignment to external stakeholder processes.

Changes related to practice guidance are provided to child intervention practitioners through Policy to Practice learning sessions. In 2020-21, Policy to Practice learning sessions were provided to staff from across the province that encouraged interactive discussions on the relationship between policy and day-to-day practice. The learning sessions topics included: improving the Enhancement Policy Manual, C-92: *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, Bi-annual policy updates, respite and relief (a joint session with Children's Services and Community and Social Services) and intervention record checks, mitigation and support planning in kinship care.

### Personalized Community Care

Personalized Community Care services are individualized care settings that address complex mental health, behavioral, emotional, developmental, and trauma-impacted care needs. These settings support a low number of children/youth in highly structured, therapeutic, supervised, and staffed community care homes. The Personalized Community Care program is a community-based, out-of-home placement that supports greater mental health promotion by working towards stabilizing and resolving mental health crises, and improving functioning and well-being of children and youth up to the age of 19.

In partnership with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, Children's Services issued a request-for-proposal in November 2020 for eight provincial personalized community care beds to increase capacity to address the care and mental health needs of children and youth who require both mental health supports and child intervention in-care involvement. As a result, in 2020-21 four beds were awarded in the Edmonton region and four beds were awarded in the Calgary region.

### Incidents, Serious Injuries and Deaths of Children and Youth with Child Intervention Involvement

To support government transparency and accountability, the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act* prescribes the duty to publicly report serious injuries and deaths of children and youth in care or receiving services at the time of their death. The act defines a serious injury as a life-threatening injury to a child that may cause significant impairment of a child's health. As per the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* and the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, all deaths were reported to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

There were nine reports of serious injuries involving young people receiving intervention services in 2020-21. In 2020-21, 34 children/youth receiving child intervention services died. Six were in care, two were not in care but receiving services, 12 of the deaths occurred during intake or assessment, and 14 were over 18 years of age and receiving support through a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined that five deaths were accidental and six were suicides. The manner of death for 19 young people is pending a determination by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Of the remaining four deaths, three did not require a review by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and one death was classified as undetermined.

In 2020-21, there were 521 children alleged to have been involved in incidents. This includes 504 children who were in care of the Director and 17 children who were not in care of the Director, but were receiving services. After the review by the Statutory Director, 112 of these incidents involving 171 children were substantiated and allegations involving the remaining 350 children have been unsubstantiated.

An incident may include, but is 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.
  - 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.

## 1.2 Support children in care to develop long-term, nurturing relationships by increasing their connections to family, significant persons and Indigenous communities.

### Kinship Care

Kinship caregivers are extended family members or persons who have a significant relationship with the child or family, or are a member of the child's cultural community and provide stable and loving temporary homes for children and youth in care. Kinship care is the preferred placement option when a child cannot remain at home, as it allows children to maintain important familial and cultural ties. They also play an important role in keeping those children and youth in their care connected to their families, communities and culture.

The number of kinship homes increased in 2020-21 demonstrating Children's Services continued commitment to enhancing and promoting the Kinship Care program in Alberta. As of March 2021 Children's Services supported 2,547 kinship homes compared to 1,712 foster homes. This supports the goal of keeping children connected to their culture and extended families and results in better outcomes for children.

In 2020-21, the Assessment and Support for Kinship Caregiving (ASKC) Pilot occurred in nine regional sites, 11 Delegated First Nation Agencies and two Metis Settlement sites across the province. The pilot is a kinship specific assessment that simultaneously assesses and supports kinship caregivers. The pilot was extended to June 2021 to allow additional time to assess and enhance the process, increase the number of families engaged in the pilot, and support a more fulsome evaluation of the model.

The ministry also strengthened kinship by:

- expanding financial authority; making it easier for kinship families to get expenses approved, reducing potential financial hardship; and
- creating specific curriculums for kinship caregivers so they better understand their role, responsibility and the supports they are entitled to receive as a caregiver.

Children's Services continued to support kinship and foster caregivers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Children's Services provided guidance to all staff and caregivers to manage the impact of COVID-19, including the creation of the COVID-19 Caregiver Preparedness Plan.

### Quick Facts

As of March 2021 there were:

- 2,547 kinship homes
- 3,216 children and youth living with kinship caregivers
  - An ↑ of 7% from 2019-20
- 1,712 foster homes
- 3,427 children and youth were placed with foster caregivers
  - A ↓ of 2% from 2019-20

Throughout COVID-19, Children's Services staff met with external partners including the Alberta Foster and Kinship Association and ALIGN Association of Community Services in order to facilitate timely communication, inform practice guidance, and address worries, and support caregivers and agencies. A COVID-19 mailbox was created in order to provide timely and consistent responses to questions from caregivers, agency staff and ministry staff.

### **Caregiver Training Refresh**

In 2020-21, the Caregiver Orientation and Core Training underwent a refresh of content to reflect current research, legislation, policy, Indigenous world-view and best practices such as the Practice Framework, Signs of Safety and trauma-informed approach. The refresh included updates and the creation of 21 new training modules. During COVID-19, Caregiver Orientation and Core Training transitioned to virtual facilitation minimizing impact to recruitment and ongoing caregiver training.

### **Intentional Search and Exploration for Family**

Intentional Search and Exploration for Family (formerly Family Finding) is a structured approach for connecting children and youth in care to family and other community supports. Intentional search and exploration for family creates an ongoing, lifelong support network, which can be sustained after caseworkers and service providers are no longer involved.

In 2020-21, the ministry continued this approach to support practitioners working through complex cases and is currently incorporating intentional search and exploration for family practice principles into Child Intervention Practitioner Training. Child intervention practitioners are supported in implementing this approach in their practice. The principles and practice of the intentional search and exploration for family approach supports child intervention practitioners to comply with the requirements under *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* with placement priorities and considerations.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

Child Intervention continues to ensure service delivery is inclusive to all, including LGBTQ2S+ young people. Child intervention policy sets out explicit expectations for child intervention practitioners to gather information about the cultural and spiritual identity of the families and children they work with to support meaningful connections. The Children's Services information system records mandatory high-level demographic information on the race of children and youth receiving services and provides reporting on Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth.

The child intervention practitioners working with children and families are required to explore and plan in four areas of connection (relational, physical, cultural, and legal) to ensure children have lasting and meaningful connections to family, friends, religion, customs, language, community, and a permanent home where they belong. Child intervention practitioners must incorporate principles and requirements such as cultural continuity into their practice to better support the well-being of the Indigenous children, youth and their families.

Service provision includes relying on community based, culturally appropriate agencies and organizations to provide advice and guidance. Whenever possible, the services and supports offered to a family reflect their unique culture and community connections.

## **1.3 Improve available services for young adults transitioning out of the child intervention system.**

### **Support and Financial Assistance Agreements**

Support and Financial Assistance Agreements (SFAAs) are available to assist young adults, who were receiving intervention services on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, in achieving independence. Services

provided under a SFAA may include living accommodation, financial assistance to meet the necessities of life and any other services required to assist the young adult achieve independence.

Every SFAA is accompanied by a transition to independence plan that is used to identify current and future planning goals for the young adult. Typically, agreements are reviewed every three months. Caseworkers work with young adults to make sure the right supports are in place, that the person is connected to the right services, and ensure there is someone in their life they can connect with to provide ongoing emotional support, mentoring and guidance.

Children's Services is focused on ensuring youth in care and those transitioning out of care have the supports they need. In March 2021, 2,169 young adults aged 18-24 had an active agreement. Young adults receive financial, social and emotional supports until they achieve independence, or are connected to other, more appropriate government or community services that meet their needs.

In 2020-21, youth whose files were previously closed due to transitioning to other services or independence or who experienced unexpected disruptions to transition plans as a result of the pandemic such as job loss, limited access to child care or changes to previously scheduled educational programming were approved to continue accessing SFAA supports provided they met existing criteria.

Client were moved from face-to-face contact to phone, text and web-based platforms where appropriate. Program recipients and their support networks received ongoing, collaborative case planning to support their transition to independence plans. All program recipients, particularly those with dependent children and/or complex service needs, received intensified services - including emergency preparedness planning.

To support a successful transition to adulthood, SFAA recipients who require access to mental health services are supported by their caseworker to access services, either through agencies contracted by Children's Services or are connected to free mental health services available in their community.

#### **1.4 Work in partnership with ministries and communities to combat human trafficking, child exploitation and domestic violence; this includes implementing a new partnership and funding model for Child Advocacy Centres.**

##### **Bringing Awareness to Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, or the exercising of control over the movements of another person. Human trafficking is a dehumanizing and predatory crime, which generally takes one of three forms: sexual exploitation, labour trafficking, or organ trafficking.

Traffickers target the most vulnerable people, particularly those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, alone or in a vulnerable situation. Targets are most often women, youth, sexual and gender diverse individuals, Indigenous and racialized persons, migrant workers and new immigrants. The majority being girls and women under 25 years of age.

##### **Actions that Support the Priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan**

###### **Key Priority 2:**

Making life better for Albertans

###### **Objective 3:**

Supporting Albertans most in need

- To protect survivors of human trafficking, the Government of Alberta established the Human Trafficking Task Force.
- The *Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act* came into force in May 2020.



Justice and Solicitor General leads implementation of the government's nine-point action plan to combat human trafficking, with the support of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Indigenous Relations, and Labour and Immigration. Two major elements of the action plan were implemented in 2020-21, the creation of a Human Trafficking Task Force and enacting *Protecting Survivors of Human Trafficking Act*, which came into force in May 2020. The ministry will continue to support Justice and Solicitor General and the Human Trafficking Task Force.

Children's Services continues to support other ministries and community organizations to combat child exploitation by sharing information with youth and parents that debunks myths about sexual exploitation and about the dangers of sharing information online and through providing resources for professionals regarding the *Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act* and statistics related to sexual exploitation.

### Child Advocacy Centres

Children's Services provides a range of specialized services to support children and youth across Alberta who are survivors of abuse. Child Advocacy Centres have multidisciplinary teams of professionals who provide a coordinated and collaborative response to reports of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse and neglect. These teams provide timely access to law enforcement, child protection, justice, prosecution, mental health, health care and advocacy services. There are Child Advocacy Centres operating in Calgary, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Lloydminster and Red Deer.

Child Advocacy Centres provide a child-centred approach to abuse investigations and coordinated access to services to reduce system-induced trauma for the abuse victims, while supporting their long-term well-being.

A three-year funding model for Child Advocacy Centres came into effect on April 1, 2020. This new model creates a more transparent and sustainable province-wide approach to funding Child Advocacy Centres and reduces red tape by streamlining processes and reducing reporting requirements.

### Combating Domestic Violence

Domestic violence, also referred to as family violence, includes physical, verbal, emotional, financial and sexual abuse, neglect, stalking, being kept from seeing other people or forced to stay in one place. Alberta has the third highest rate of self-reported spousal violence among Canadian provinces, yet domestic violence is preventable.

Children's Services is one of several ministries that supports Community and Social Services, as the lead ministry, working to prevent, reduce and end family violence in Alberta. The ministries coordinate a provincial response to family violence and in partnership with service providers and communities, build on effective practices already in place and implement priorities in family violence prevention, intervention and response.

In 2020-21, a cross-ministry working group co-led by Community and Social Services and Justice and Solicitor General and with the advice of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta,

#### Actions that Support the Priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

##### Key Priority 2:

Making life better for Albertans

##### Objective 3:

Supporting Albertans most in need

- In 2020-21, Children's Services supported the implementation plan that allows individuals who feel at risk of domestic violence the ability to access their partner's criminal records to find out if their partner has an abusive or violent past. Violence prevention tools such as this helps ensure the safety and well-being of individuals and children.

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engaged with Albertans and worked to develop and finalize the operational processes needed for the implementation of Clare's Law. Effective April 1, 2021, the *Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence (Clare's Law) Act* is a new prevention tool that allows people who may be at risk to request information regarding an intimate partner's history of domestic violence or other relevant actions.

## **1.5 Review the Adoptions program with the intent of reducing red tape and making the processes more efficient and timely for families.**

### **Post-Adoption Registry**

The Post-Adoption Registry maintains Alberta adoption records dating back to the 1920s and provides information and services related to all adoptions granted in Alberta to adult adoptees, descendants of deceased adoptees, birth parents, birth family members and adoptive parents.

On December 9, 2020, Bill 48 the *Red Tape Reduction Implementation Act, 2020* was passed coupled with amendments to the *Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act* resulting in improved access to adoption information for adult adoptees, birth parents and siblings. These changes simplified and standardized adoption processes to align with current practice and clarify adoption terminology.

Effective January 1, 2021, Children's Services is able to release identifying biological background information to an adopted person or their descendants, siblings and biological parents unless a specific veto has already been filed. In order to respect the balance between information disclosure and the right to privacy, additional information will not be released to siblings until July 1, 2021. This will allow adopted persons to have time during the six-month transition period for the submission of a veto, if they choose.

As a result, barriers for extended family members applying to have contact with an adoptee have been removed. Family members, such as grandparents, no longer require birth parent consent to register. Band members and Metis Settlement members can also register to connect with an adoptee from their same band or settlement.

Changes will benefit groups impacted by closed adoption practices. For example, many Indigenous people who were separated by adoption during the Sixties Scoop do not have access to information that would help them reunite with family members.

### **Adoption Advertising**

Regulatory amendments for the Adoption Regulation were established on November 25, 2020 and provide direction to licensed adoption agencies regarding the publication of approved family profiles, profile management, reporting requirements, as well as the authority to charge for any additional expenses incurred in relation to advertising profiles.

### **Adoption Agency Transparency**

To support prospective parents and help them make informed choices when selecting an adoption agency, Children's Services implemented changes that increase accountability and transparency of licensed agencies by requiring agencies to disclose if they have any conditions on their license and clearly outline to prospective parents which fees are non-refundable and which are held in trust.

Adoption agencies are now more accountable to those they serve by making information about fees and trust funds clearer and more accessible. Having more information about how fees are used, retained and where money is being held helps Albertans looking to adopt make more informed decisions.

**1.6 Enhance existing technologies, such as Child Intervention Case Information Online, to support greater efficiency for front-line caseload management through an Enterprise Content Management (ECM) system.**

**Case Connect**

Case Connect is a mobile application that enables child intervention caseworkers to use a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to enter case information into the case management system while away from the office. In 2020-21, more than 96,000 contact logs were created and more than 760 staff use Case Connect each month.

The need for and benefit of digital options was emphasized in 2020-21 during the pandemic and Case Connect aligns with the move toward digital records management, reducing reliance on paper notes and records. Case Connect is one part of a larger red tape initiative to develop paperless workflows with the aim of reducing administrative burden by eliminating the duplication of work previously required to transcribe hand-written notes and reducing caseworker travel time allowing more time to work directly with families.

**Electronic Content Management**

Children's Services is committed to building electronic child intervention records and reducing reliance on paper records. An enterprise content management system has been integrated with the Child Intervention Case Information Online system to provide staff with document management technology to upload, organize, manage and retrieve documents electronically.

Having available, up-to-date electronic information supports decision-making and the safety and well-being of children and families. An electronic document management system makes fully electronic child intervention records possible. Document management functionality provides staff with features allow them to get more administrative work done in less time.



**Performance Measure 1.a:**  
**Percentage of cases opening to child intervention without involvement in the last year**

	Prior Years' Results				2020-21 Target	2020-21 Actual
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20		
<b>Indigenous</b>	84%	80%	85%	81%	85%	83%
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	90%	88%	89%	91%	90%	89%

The ministry continues to work collaboratively with parents and extended family to develop family, cultural and community connections for children that support their safety and well-being. Child intervention services support safe and healthy children and families by looking at the family's situation and identifying the most effective ways of helping the family through their challenges.

This performance measure shows the percentage of files that opened for children and youth without child intervention involvement in the last 12 months. An increase in the metric is one indication that services provided are successful in supporting parents and guardians to provide a safe and nurturing environment, so children can remain at home or return home to their families.

The result for 2020-21 while positive did not meet the target set at 85 per cent for Indigenous children and youth and 90 per cent for non-Indigenous children and youth. The slight variability in results is mainly due to families requiring additional services for an escalation of an existing need or new challenges requiring child intervention support and services.

A family may return for a variety of services within 12 months for a variety of reasons. For instance, a family may seek a referral for support from a community program; circumstances may have changed and could be substantially different from the previous involvement; the family may not have been ready to end their involvement with child intervention and return for the same reason that brought them to Children's Services in the first place; or, it may be a positive indication the family feels safe and supported to return to Children's Services and ask for further assistance.

**Performance Measure 1.b:**  
**Percentage of children in care placed in family-based care**

	Prior Years' Results				2020-21 Target	2020-21 Actual
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20		
<b>Indigenous</b>	85%	85%	85%	85%	86%	86%
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	83%	84%	84%	86%	86%	86%

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 commitment to provide a 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.

The ministry met its target for the year, which resulted in 86 per cent of Indigenous children and 86 per cent of non-Indigenous children being placed in family-based care, which was through kinship care, foster care or permanent placements. Results for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children remain consistent and demonstrate the ministry's commitment to placing children in family settings whenever it is safe to do so.

Higher percentages of children placed in family-based placements may indicate that child intervention services collaborate with parents and extended family to maintain familial, cultural and community connections to pursue reunifications of families and support child safety and well-being. Children and youth in these family-based settings often result in successful reunifications, adoptions or private guardianships.

**Performance Indicator 1.c:****Children receiving child intervention services as a percentage of the child population in Alberta**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Number of children receiving child intervention services</b>	15,564	15,624	16,123	16,210	15,228
<b>Children in Alberta</b>	938,410	948,261 <sup>1</sup>	958,367 <sup>1</sup>	970,452	976,730
<b>Percentage</b>	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%

Note 1: These values have been revised to incorporate the updated numbers in the Statistics Canada Table 17-10-0005-01.

This performance indicator describes the percentage of children, aged 0 to 17 years, receiving child intervention services as a percentage of the total child population in Alberta. Tracking both the number of children in Alberta and the number of children receiving child intervention services enables Children's Services to monitor and plan should caseload demands increase.

In 2020-21, 15,228 children received child intervention services, or 1.6 per cent of the total child population in Alberta. Recognizing the growth in child population, the percentage of children who received child intervention services has been steady over the last five years. For instance, between 2016 and 2019, the number of unique children receiving services shows a slight increase each year until 2020 when a significant decrease was realized. This decrease in the number of children receiving child intervention services in 2020 can be related to the decrease in referrals caused by multidimensional effects of COVID-19.

**Performance Indicator 1.d:****Percentage of Indigenous children in kinship or foster care who are placed with Indigenous families**

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
43%	44%	45%	46%	45%

This performance indicator reports the percentage of Indigenous children and youth receiving culturally appropriate services through foster care or kinship care. It demonstrates the ministry's commitment to place children and youth who come into care with extended family members, individuals who are emotionally connected with the child, or with a family who shares cultural, community, or spiritual/religious connections.

In 2020-21, 45 per cent of Indigenous children and youth were placed with Indigenous families. Although this is a one percent drop from 2019-20, there has been an upward trend over the previous four years.

As of March 31, 2021, there were 2,547 approved kinship homes, and 1,712 approved and licensed foster homes in Alberta. Compared to a year ago, the number of kinship homes and foster homes grew 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. 52 per cent of kinship home caregivers identified as Indigenous and 13 per cent of foster home caregivers identified as Indigenous.

Ministry initiatives that work to see Indigenous children placed in their community with extended family, with individuals emotionally connected to them or with a similar Indigenous culture include Intentional Search and Exploration for Family, a structured approach in connecting children and youth in care to family and other community supports; and the Assessment and Supports for Kinship Caregivers tools and process which bolsters how supports are determined and offered to kinship families, helping to safely place more children in kinship homes.

## Outcome Two: The growth and development of children are supported through accessible, affordable and quality child care

Children, youth and families are supported to engage fully in their communities, which includes parents' ability to pursue post-secondary education and take part in the workforce. The ministry is committed to maintaining access to affordable, quality child care programs, and promoting culturally appropriate community-based early childhood services, parenting resources and supports.

### Key Objectives

#### 2.1 Improve access to child care by supporting initiatives that encourage affordability and quality in the child care system.

This past year has brought unprecedented challenges for families, child care programs and child care educators. At the onset of the pandemic, public health orders required licensed daycare, out-of-school care and preschool programs to close. Many working parents were able to transition to "work from home" arrangements; others, particularly women, had to choose between employment and taking care of their families. Child care programs had to shut down operations and they faced a period of uncertainty, creating instability for families and their operations for the foreseeable future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how critical accessible, affordable, inclusive, and high-quality child care is for families, children, and our economy. Children's Services has taken action to support parents and licensed child care providers to sustain a strong and stable child care sector that keeps children as safe as possible and helps parents get back to work and stay at work.

#### Supporting Alberta's Workers and Families during COVID-19

On March 16, 2020, a public health order required all licensed child care programs to close, significantly impacting children, families, and staff and program operators. Shortly after the mandatory closure, the ministry supported some child care providers to reopen for essential workers. Safe child care was key to getting many Albertans back to work. The ministry worked to ensure child care was not a barrier for those who were doing the work required to maintain the critical services for Albertans, including healthcare practitioners, critical infrastructure workers, and first responders.

### Actions that Support the Priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

#### Key Priority 1:

Supporting job creation

#### Objective 2:

Making Alberta open for business

- Throughout 2020-21, Children's Services improved access to child care through a number of initiatives, including a renegotiated bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada to redirect funding towards an enhanced child care subsidy model to support low and middle income families who use licensed child care; creating new child care spaces where they're needed most (including new overnight spaces for parents who work non-traditional hours); and enhancing child care supports for children who have special needs.
- A key focus was supporting child care programs to reopen and stay open, directing more than \$130 million to programs to help them address operational challenges resulting from the pandemic.

Between March 23 and May 14, 2020, approximately 200 daycare and out-of-school care programs were approved to reopen a limited number of child care spaces to essential service workers, offering approximately 4,500 spaces to qualifying families in 33 communities.

Preparing to make child care spaces available for essential workers during the early days of the pandemic came with uncertainty for child care operators. For this reason, Children's Services provided operators with Vacant Spaces Grants, which paid up to \$41 per day for each unfilled daycare space and \$31 per day for each unfilled out-of-school care space, in addition to \$500 for the purchase of cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment. A total of \$4.7 million was spent to support the essential services child care initiative.

On May 14, 2020, licensed child care operators were approved to reopen under Alberta's Relaunch Plan provided they adhered to the requirements set by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Children's Services supported operators of licensed child care centres to implement these guidelines within their programs to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among children, parents, guardians, staff and volunteers. Over the course of the pandemic, Children's Services in partnership with the federal government, spent approximately \$130 million in relief funding to support child care providers, including:

- \$30.0 million through the Child Care Relief Program which provided support to Child Care Operators to ensure a safe reopening;
- \$72.9 million through the provincial/federal Safe Restart Agreement distributed to eligible programs between mid-October and mid-November;
- \$11.1 million in surplus funding from the 2019-20 Bilateral Agreement in February 2021; and
- \$15.7 million through a one-time Critical Worker Benefit payment, recognizing the front-line work and risk taken by certified Early Childhood Educators to provide safe, high-quality, critical child care.

### **Accessible Child Care**

Access to safe and reliable child care plays a key role in the economic recovery of Alberta by enabling parents to stay working or return to work. On May 14, 2020, all child care programs were allowed to re-open.

Throughout 2020-21, Children's Services worked to improve access to child care. This included renegotiating the bilateral agreement with the federal government, updating the subsidy model to make child care more affordable, investing funds to create new spaces where they are needed most, enhancing inclusion initiatives, and supporting child care programs to reopen and stay open through the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

### **Space Creation and Overnight Care**

The ministry recognizes parents need the right child care space in the right place – whether it is in their community or close to their work or school, day time hours or overnight. Some communities in Alberta have a shortage of licensed high-quality child-care spaces, leading to child care “hot spots” or ‘deserts’.

In partnership with the Government of Canada in 2020-21, Children's Services directed \$10.3 million in grants to increase the number of spaces in many areas of need, and to provide more child care options that are culturally or linguistically diverse or offered outside of regular hours, including new overnight child care spaces.

On January 25, 2021, the ministry released the Child Care Capacity Building Expression of Interest (EOI), offering one time funding to qualified existing family day home agencies and new and existing daycare programs to expand their services. The Child Care Capacity Building EOI sought

proposals to create new child care spaces in communities with limited or no licensed child care options, create overnight child care spaces in communities where there is a high demand for this service, and implement one or more program improvements to better support the needs of children and families. A total of \$10.3 million was awarded in 44 one-time grants to create up to 1,600 spaces in daycares and family day homes.

### Child Care Resources for Parents

Every family is different and has different child care needs. Many families access licensed child care programs, while others choose unlicensed day homes or enter into private child care arrangements with family, friends or neighbours. To help parents make informed decisions, Children's Services updated the Choosing Child Care in Alberta Guide about the types of child care available in Alberta. The guide includes a checklist of questions parents can ask and lists what to look for when considering their child care options.

### Affordable Child Care through Subsidies

The Alberta government is committed to supporting families most in need to access child care. To achieve this, Children's Services assists eligible families with children from birth to 12 years of age and not yet in grade seven to pay for child care costs for children enrolled in licensed facility-based programs and licensed family day home agencies. The Alberta Child Care Subsidy program provides full subsidy for eligible families earning up to \$50,000 per year, and partial subsidy for those earning up to \$75,000 per year. This is one of the most generous thresholds in Canada.

In 2020-21, the ministry provided a subsidy to 22,967 children (as at March 2021), 68 per cent of whom received a full subsidy. Although the pandemic reduced enrolment by 20 per cent compared to 2019-20, the proportion of children enrolled in licensed child care who received subsidy has remained stable with 26 per cent of children receiving subsidy in 2019-20 and 27 per cent of children receiving subsidy in 2020-21. Data shows that 66 per cent are children of single parents.

Children's Services subsidizes infant care costs through the Infant Care Incentive Program, paying a universal grant of \$150 per month to licensed daycares and approved family day home agencies to offset the higher cost associated with caring for infants under 18 months of age. In 2020-21, the ministry supported nearly 4,100 infant spaces under this program.

Changes to the child care subsidy model and rates came into effect August 1, 2020. The new subsidy model is simpler and easier to understand, with clear eligibility criteria and straightforward income threshold calculation. It provides a higher benefit to families most in need. They can feel more comfortable accepting new opportunities at work, knowing that a raise in income won't necessarily result in all of their new income paying the difference for child care, as the new step model provides transparent rates with gradual subsidy decreases as incomes grow.

This means a fully subsidized:

- infant is supported with \$741/month (previously \$628/month)
- toddler is supported with \$644/month (previously \$546/month)
- school-age child is supported with \$366/month (previously \$310/month).

### Child Care Connect

A toll-free line 1-844-644-5165 for parents seeking information or support with child care such as:

- Options for child care in their area;
- Find out if their unlicensed provider has been issued an order to stop providing child care within the past 24 months; and
- Report concerns, complaints or incidents related to a child care program.



Under the new subsidy model, approximately 21,000 children receive child care for \$25-a-day or less, with parent fees of \$13 per day or less for 12,749 of these children. Compared to January 2020, under the new subsidy program, parents receiving full subsidy in January 2021 pay:

- 16 per cent less for daycare;
- 21 per cent less for family day home; and
- 12 per cent less for out-of-school care.

In July and August 2020, subsidy rates for children attending out-of-school care programs were increased to match daycare subsidy rates to better assist families to pay their higher full-time summer fees. As a result, fully subsidized children in grades 1 through 6 received \$644 in subsidy in both July and August instead of the regular school age rate of \$366 in those months.

### **Working Parent Benefit – Relief Supports During Pandemic**

Working families have faced additional pressure and costs because of the pandemic. Some have lost their jobs, some are working fewer hours, and all families have experienced more anxiety and stress. As a result, fewer families used licensed child care, which has meant that child care subsidy needs were met at a lower cost.

The Working Parents Benefit provided a one-time payment of \$561 per child to working parents who paid for and used child care so they could continue working or going to school during the pandemic. The benefit was available to low and middle-income families with an annual household income up to \$100,000 who had paid at least \$561 per child for child care for three or more months between April 1 and December 31, 2020. The Working Parents Benefit helped about 21,000 families and 30,200 children.

### **Professional Development, Certification and Training**

Children's Services recognizes the shared responsibility in building the capacity of the child care sector and helping programs to operate under the licensing requirements. The ministry provided funding for coaching and mentoring support designed to meet the specific business needs of child care programs and ensure their long-term sustainability.

In 2020-21, 80 licensed child care programs received a total of 699 hours of Leading Improvement Nurturing Knowledge (LINK) support to enhance their ability to meet licensing requirements in five key areas, including staffing and ratios, supervision, child discipline and meeting the developmental needs of children. An additional 291 licensed programs received coaching and mentoring from Alberta Childcare Ventures in the areas of financial management, business and strategic planning, setting business policies and procedures, human resources, marketing and advertising, customer service and parent relations.

Research demonstrates that early childhood educators are critically important to creating high-quality learning environments and influencing the experiences that shape child development. Child care professionals with educational backgrounds in early childhood development have specialized knowledge to support the healthy development and well-being of children.

Under the provincial certification process, the ministry assesses post-secondary early childhood education training at one of the three levels of certification. More than 2,000 child care staff completed the Alberta Child Care Orientation Course that leads to certification as a Level 1 early childhood educator. This course is offered at no cost to child care staff that enter the field with no formal education in early learning and child care.

The new *Early Learning and Child Care Act* changed the names of the three certification levels, moving from Child Development Worker, Assistant and Supervisor to Level 1, 2 and 3 respectively. As of March 2021, there were approximately 14,984 early childhood educators working in licensed



daycare centres, out-of-school care programs and family day home agencies. Approximately 59 per cent of these educators were certified as Level 2 and Level 3, holding at least a one- or two-year educational credential in early learning and child care or equivalent.

In March 2021, there were:

- 6,079 early childhood educators certified as Level 1 (formerly referred to as Child Development Worker);
- 2,360 early childhood educators certified as Level 2 (formerly Child Development Assistant); and
- 6,545 early childhood educators certified as Level 3 (formerly Child Development Supervisor).

A well-trained and highly skilled early childhood workforce provides enriched environments and promotes positive brain development, learning, and long-term outcomes for children. That is why the ministry continued to support licensed programs to recruit and retain qualified early childhood educators by providing \$78 million for wage top ups (up to \$6.62 per hour) and \$679,000 for professional development (up to \$1,700 per year). All certified educators working in licensed daycare centres, out-of-school care programs and family day home agencies had access to this funding.

Improving training to address the whole child (physical, social, emotional, cognitive and communication/language) and having learning expectations for each supports child care educators to observe children and adapt activities to best meet their needs. The curricula serve additional purposes, such as promoting standards of quality across programs and facilitating communication between parents and staff.

Children's Services continues to engage and collaborate with external stakeholders to implement the expansion of the Flight: Alberta's Early Learning and Care Curriculum Framework, the evidence-based practice framework that helps guide early learning and child care educators for young children. In 2020-21, 1,091 students completed the 22-week advanced-level Flight course with 1,051 completing the basic introductory training through ministry grants.

Through the renegotiated 2020-21 bilateral agreement with the federal government, Children's Services directed \$4.7 million to further expand the curriculum across all child care programs in the province during the next two years. The investments will focus on the development and delivery of a new Intermediate level professional learning online workshop series for 3,000 students per year, offer the existing basic level workshop series to a higher number of students and ensure that the advanced level Flight course continues to be delivered to 1,000 students per year.

### **Safety in Unlicensed Child Care**

With the new *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, the province now has the authority to issue a stop order to an unlicensed provider in cases of imminent harm to children, an authority that was not available under the previous legislation. The new legislation maintains the authority to issue a stop order to unlicensed providers who provide child care for more than six children in their home (not including their own children). In addition, parents can now call the new Child Care Connect to check whether an unlicensed provider has been ordered to stop providing child care in the previous 24 months because they were caring for too many children or children were at risk of imminent harm.

For situations involving quality of care and safety concerns, licensing staff work closely with operators and other collateral authorities such as the police, public health, and municipal fire and zoning to safeguard the care of children.

To support quality and safety in child care programs, the new *Early Learning and Child Care Act* includes "Conduct Requirements" provisions, allowing the ministry to suspend certification of

educators, refuse certification of new applicants, and put conditions on the certification of new and existing certified educators. These Conduct Requirements require the self-disclosure of any reportable occurrence that includes an active investigation, charge, court hearing, trial or conviction related to criminal activity, offenses related to the harm of a child or adult, orders and prohibitions.

Children's Services recognizes the importance of assisting unlicensed child care operators to provide quality care in their homes. Released in February 2021, the *Providing Child Care in Your Home* Guide offers key information to support safe and developmentally appropriate child care in private home-based child care settings.

### **2.2 Create digital opportunities for families to access information and benefits related to child care more easily and efficiently.**

In collaboration with the Alberta Digital Innovation Office (DIO), Children's Services continued to provide better, more effective service to Albertans in 2020-21 by launching the new online Child Care Staff Certification Application to improve convenience and speed up the process for potential Early Childhood Educators to become certified. This means that potential Early Childhood Educators can be certified sooner, allowing them to begin earning government wage top ups in licensed programs sooner.

Through the Child Care Staff Certification Application, applicants can apply and submit documents online and through mobile devices. The secure MyAlberta Digital ID is used to confirm verification of applicants. Since the launch in May 2020, more than 3,600 applications were submitted through the new application. There are about 15,000 staff currently working in licensed and approved child care programs.

### **2.3 Enhance and promote diversity in licensed and approved child care services, including supports that are culturally inclusive and for children with unique needs.**

When children with unique needs do not have access to inclusive child care programs, they miss out on opportunities for social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Inclusive child care environments help every child to feel accepted, valued and safe. Having access to inclusive child care is also important for families with children with disabilities or special needs to support their participation in the workforce. Children's Services provides supports to facilitate access for these families to licensed child care centres and family day homes.

#### **Inclusive Child Care Program**

Inclusion in child care means children of all backgrounds and abilities are able to access and benefit from high-quality child care provided by licensed operators and certified early childhood educators. With funding from the 2020-21 bilateral agreement with the federal government, the ministry continues working to provide child care operators with increased and consistent access to coaching, professional development and funding for additional staff to support children who have diverse needs.

In 2020-21, 615 licensed programs received support to include children with diverse needs. Children's Services also directed \$4 million for the development of a new Inclusive Child Care model that will lead to equitable access to resources, supports and training across all regions of the province. The new Inclusive Child Care program will be implemented across the province in 2021-22.

## Access, Support and Participation (ASaP) program

The Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) program supports the meaningful participation of children in child care programs through the ASaP program. Participating child care programs strengthen inclusion practices through professional development and on-site coaching supports. The ASaP team works with child care programs to create high-quality, responsive environments, intentionally teach social and emotional development and respond effectively to challenging behaviors. Additionally, ASaP supports child care programs to tailor the curriculum to respond to the individual abilities and unique needs of each child.

The ASaP program is delivered with provincial and federal grants administered through Children's Services. In 2020-21, Children's Services provided \$3.5 million over two years to support delivery of ASaP in all areas of the province.

### 2.4 Review the *Child Care Licensing Act* with the intent of reducing red tape, supporting choice for parents, and maintaining focus on the safety and well-being of children

In 2020-21, Children's Services was focused on transforming the child care system to one that is based on the principles of quality, affordability and access to child care that supports all working families, while targeting investments to help those who need it most. A key component of this process is the new *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and Regulation, which came into force on February 1, 2021.

#### Legislation Review and Public Consultations

In the summer of 2020, the ministry completed the first child care consultation in over a decade, giving key stakeholders an opportunity to share their perspectives and provide feedback on child care transformation. The ministry received and considered 9,729 survey responses and 47 written submissions:

- Parents/caregivers: 7,406 surveys
- Early Childhood Educators: 1,657 surveys
- Operators & stakeholder organizations: 605 surveys
- Ministry licensing staff: 61 surveys

On February 1, 2021, the *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and Regulation came into force and defined the expectations for high-quality and safety within licensed programs. Through this updated legislation, Children's Services is improving the standard of care for children while creating a more modern and flexible approach to child care programs. Less unnecessary paperwork for operators means more time for them to spend supporting children. This includes more flexibility with mixed-aged groups, ratios and access to outdoor spaces, as well as reduced unnecessary documentation requirements, encouraging digital record keeping.

Changes to the act allow initial licenses for already established operators to be provided for up to three years, instead of one year. This will result in fewer administrative tasks required to complete an initial and a subsequent renewal inspection. Once a program renews their initial license, the term of the license will no longer have an expiry date. This change will significantly reduce red tape and

#### Actions that Support the Priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

##### Key Priority 1:

Supporting job creation

##### Objective 3:

Reducing red tape

- The *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and Regulation improves the standard for quality and safety in licensed programs, provides more information and transparency to parents and caregivers, streamlines and modernizes licensing processes and requirements, and reduces red tape by 52 per cent giving providers more flexibility to better support families in their communities.

administrative burden on programs, who were required to renew their license every three years under the previous act.

Operators who previously required multiple licenses for different types of care will now be able to run different types of care under a single license. This change reduced the regulation schedules down to one for facility-based programs, which allows operators offering daycare, out-of-school care, and preschools to follow one set of standards.

The previous Child Care Licensing Regulation contained a lengthy list of regulated requirements to apply for a license. The new Early Learning and Child Care Regulation removes the specifics from the Regulation to reduce red tape and add flexibility for amending requirements in the future.

One of the key changes in the legislation is the addition of the new guiding principles and matters to be considered that outline expectations for quality. This means that quality is no longer optional, but required by legislation, in child care. Additionally, the changes to the name of the act and Regulation emphasize the importance of early childhood learning and development in licensed child care settings. The language and terminology throughout the legislation have been updated and simplified to reflect best practices and align with current standards and expectations.

### **Increased Transparency for Parents**

The ministry knows how important it is to provide parents who access child care with more information to support their decision-making. Under the new act, licensed facilities are required to directly inform parents of actions against their license that was previously only required to be posted on the program's premises. Children's Services is now also able to disclose any stop orders that have been issued against an unlicensed provider within the previous 24 months.

To further help parents make informed child care decisions and address their questions and issues related to child care, the ministry developed new online resources such as Choosing Child Care, and Child Care Connect, a toll-free phone line providing information and resources.

**Performance Measure 2.a:  
Percentage change in the number of licensed and approved child care spaces**

Prior Years' Results				2020-21 Target	2020-21 Actual
2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20		
7%	7%	5%	5%	4%	4%

Note: The number of spaces available reflects March data – a point in time count.

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 performance measure reports the percentage increase in the number of licensed and approved child care spaces. Spaces refer to the maximum number of children the child care centres can accommodate from family day homes, group family child care programs, and innovative child care programs to all facility-based program spaces, including daycare, out-of-school care and preschools.

In 2020-21, the number of licensed child care spaces increased by four per cent relative to the previous year, achieving the established target of four per cent. The desired result is influenced by the demand and supply for child care throughout the province. For instance, licensed and approved child care spaces are influenced by factors affecting demand for child care, such as population growth; whereas factors affecting the supply of child care include government support through federal and provincial funding. As the province faces significant macro-economic impacts stemming from a global pandemic, a high unemployment rate and low oil prices, the demand for child care is expected to continue to fluctuate.

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**Performance Indicator 2.b:  
Licensed and approved child care spaces**

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
116,714	124,824	131,624	138,367 <sup>1</sup>	143,469

Note 1: The number of spaces available reflects March data – a point in time count.

Note 2: The “Per cent increase year over year” indicator included in the 2020-23 Children’s Services Business Plan was removed due to duplication with Performance Measure 2.a.

This indicator measures the number of available licensed and approved child care spaces at the end of March in a given year. Spaces refer to the maximum number of children the child care centres can accommodate from family day homes, group family child care programs, and innovative child care programs to all facility-based program spaces, including daycare, out-of-school care and preschools.

In 2020-21, there were 143,469 available licensed and approved child care spaces in the province. This year’s result is an increase of 5,102 over 2019-20 results. Since 2016-17, the number of available spaces has increased by 26,755.

**Performance Indicator 2.c:  
Licensed and approved child care enrolment**

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
<b>Number of children enrolled</b>	93,132	100,929	105,800	109,342 <sup>1</sup>	84,226 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Per cent of total enrolment</b>	79.8%	80.9%	80.4%	79.0%	58.7%

Note 1: The number of spaces available reflects March data – a point in time count, but March 2020 preschool enrolment was approximated using December 2019 preschool data.

Note 2: March 2021 preschool enrolment was estimated using survey data as at March 22-26, 2021.

This performance indicator reports the actual number of children in child care programs and the percentage of children enrolled with respect to the available spaces. Spaces refer to the maximum number of children the child care centres can accommodate from family day homes, group family child care programs, and innovative child care programs to all facility-based program spaces, including daycare, out-of-school care and preschools.

In March 2021, 84,226 children were enrolled in a licensed and approved child care program, reflecting 58.7 per cent enrolment. However, throughout the fiscal year there were variations in enrollment due to the pandemic. For example, in April 2020 enrolment in daycares and out-of-school care programs was limited to the children of essential service workers with an average enrolment of 14 per cent. In mid-May, when the sector reopened for all families, enrolment in daycare and out-of-school care was at 27 per cent. As the pandemic progressed, more children began attending child care and enrolments across the sector increased to approximately 60 per cent. Since 2016, enrolment has remained steady at approximately 80 per cent until this last fiscal year where there was a 20 per cent drop, attributable to the pandemic.

**Performance Indicator 2.d:**  
**Average annual Child Care Subsidy caseload**

2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
25,114	27,031	28,259	28,729	22,967 <sup>1</sup>

Note 1: The 2020-21 results utilized data in March 2021 instead of the annual average. This was due to extreme variations month to month which negatively skewed the annual average (15,499).

Note 2: The subsidy caseload is an average over 12 months of subsidies paid to families.

This performance indicator reports the number of subsidies paid to families in the fiscal year. The subsidy caseload numbers include full and partial subsidies. Subsidy enrolment rates have increased year over year until 2019-20, reflecting the ongoing need to support low-income families with their child care costs.

In March 2021, 22,967 children were supported either through full or partial child care subsidy. Subsidies can be paid as a partial rate if the child attends less than the full-time hours of care; and the family income exceeds the full subsidy threshold (income of \$50,000).

The lower subsidy caseload in 2020-21 is a result of many different factors including many parents working from home and not requiring child care, parental concerns regarding possible exposure to COVID-19 therefore choosing alternate child care arrangements, or in some cases parents being laid off or businesses forced to close and child care not being required or affordable.



### **Outcome Three: The well-being, resiliency and cultural connections of children, youth and families are nurtured and enhanced**

Children, youth and families are supported through a continuum of government and community-based prevention and early intervention services that support the well-being of children and youth; develop and strengthen caregiver knowledge, capacity and skills; promote the development of social connections and family supports; and enhance connections with Indigenous communities. The ministry works in partnership with other ministries to break down barriers and address challenges vulnerable children and youth may encounter such as addiction, mental illness, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation.

#### **Key Objectives**

#### **3.1 Implement new Family Resource Networks, which will provide equitable access to a range of prevention and early intervention supports for children and youth up to age 18 and their families, including providing supports to enhance parenting skills and knowledge in their home environment.**

##### **Family Resource Networks**

Launched on April 1, 2020, Family Resource Networks (FRN) are networks of agencies working together to provide a continuum of services for children, youth and families. FRNs deliver high quality prevention and early intervention services and supports for children aged 0 to 18. FRNs cover three core service delivery domains: child development and well-being; caregiver capacity building supports and social connections and supports. The key areas ensure children build the best possible foundation in their early years, youth have the resources they need to be successful and parents and caregivers are supported in raising their families. FRNs provide a range of services and supports that focus on strengthening parenting and caregiving knowledge, social support, coping and problem-solving skills, access to community supports and resources, improving child and youth development, building resiliency and fostering well-being.

Through a 'hub and spoke' model of service delivery, Networks (hubs) coordinate the prevention and early intervention services in all geographic areas and in various cultural communities across the province – either directly or through collaborative partnerships with qualified service agencies or providers (spokes).

In 2020-21 there were 70 FRNs located across the province. All FRNs respect the perspectives of diverse cultural identities and provide resources and programming that is responsive to all Albertans. Indigenous-serving FRNs reflect the culture, language and spirituality of the people they serve and support their unique cultural needs. Multicultural serving FRNs reflect the distinct needs of other cultural communities including Francophone, new Canadians, immigrants and other ethno-cultural groups. All FRNs are trauma-informed and held to a high standard to ensure Alberta children and families receive the best services available to support them.

In 2020-21, there were 18 culturally-based FRNs:

Five Indigenous	South, Calgary, Central, Edmonton and Northern regions.
Two multicultural	Edmonton region
Eight Alberta Metis Settlements	Edmonton region and Metis Settlement areas.
Two On-Reserve communities	Calgary area
One Francophone	Calgary area

In 2020-21, approximately 28,000 adults and 34,000 children received prevention and early intervention services through the FRNs. During the pandemic, FRNs quickly pivoted to online and digital supports to safely deliver targeted and high-quality services across Alberta, remotely and in-person, in accordance with Alberta public health guidelines.

### **3.2 Develop strategies to support safe, healthy and resilient children and families, including mentoring opportunities for children and youth who have experienced trauma.**

#### **Streamlining Financial Supports for Low-Income Families**

The Government of Alberta provides various financial support programs to help families provide a better quality of life for their children, support their well-being and give children opportunities to reach their potential. These programs improve lives for Albertans by helping address child poverty.

In efforts to focus benefits on Albertans most in need and streamline administration, in July 2020 the Government of Alberta consolidated the Alberta Child Benefit and Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit into a single program, the new Alberta Child and Family Benefit. The Alberta Child and Family Benefit focuses dollars more effectively on families with lower incomes, with many families receiving higher benefits than they did under the old programs. The Alberta Child and Family Benefit is non-taxable and does not affect eligibility for other benefit programs such as Alberta Child Care Subsidy, Income Support, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Alberta Seniors Benefit, Alberta Adult Health Benefits or Alberta Child Health Benefits, assisting low-income families to provide a better quality of life for their children.

#### **Improving Access to Mental Health Services**

Children's Services focuses on promoting positive mental health, fostering resilience and improving well-being of children and youth involved with Children's Services, as well as those at risk of involvement. In 2020-21, the ministry provided \$1.1 million to community-based organizations through the Mental Health Grant program. This program enhances access to trauma-informed mental health supports including mental health screening and assessments, brief intervention services, connection to community resources and outreach supports for children, youth and families with current or previous involvement with the ministry. In 2020-21, program delivery transitioned to online and remote methods in order to ensure children, youth and families had safe access to services and resources throughout the pandemic.

In 2020-21, Children's Services also allocated \$6.4 million in contracts with service providers to support mental health assessment services, counselling and therapy for children and youth in care suffering from mental health issues and trauma impacts.

#### **Youth Suicide Prevention**

*Building Strength, Inspiring Hope: A Provincial Action Plan for Youth Suicide Prevention 2019–2024* launched March 2019 and is co-led by Alberta Health and Children's Services. The purpose of the Plan is to coordinate provincial efforts, provide guidance for evidence informed civil society activities, and support local municipal, provincial and national initiatives for youth suicide prevention, including targeted prevention, intervention and post-intervention activities for priority youth populations, rural and Indigenous communities and Metis Settlements.

During 2020-21, the ministry provided approximately \$1.2 million through 13 grants to provide youth suicide prevention supports and services, training, awareness and education. Achievements in 2020-21 include increasing supports for Indigenous and Métis youth through culture camps and culturally-focused services; providing training related to suicide prevention, mental health, and

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peer support to over 1,000 individuals; providing media awareness training to journalism students; and supporting four research grants addressing gaps in knowledge .

### **211 Alberta**

In April 2020, Children's Services launched a pilot program, under the Youth Suicide Prevention Action Plan with 211 Alberta to provide additional referral and advocacy supports specifically for youth in or transitioning out of care. 211 Alberta is an information and referral service that helps Albertans connect to a full range of social, health and government supports and services.

Youth in care have the option of receiving follow-up contact from 211 Community Resource Specialists to ensure the initial referral was successful. If the referral was not successful, the follow-up contact can assist with problem solving for alternative resources.

### **Opioid and Substance Abuse Training**

With an increase of opioid and substance use, Children's Services recognized a need to provide training to staff in child intervention with a focus on appropriate responses and tools they need to support vulnerable children, youth and families in Alberta. Opioids and Substance Use Training was introduced February 2021 and is mandatory for child intervention practitioners and encouraged for all public-facing child intervention staff interacting with Albertans.

### **Caregiver Connections**

The Caregiver Connections program is a free peer support program for parents and caregivers caring for a loved one with a mental health concern, illness or addiction. With the support of trained peers, parents and caregivers learn how to best take care of themselves, ask for help when necessary and learn about the importance of boundaries. Caregiver Connections provides parents and caregivers with compassionate support, along with specific information and connection to other resources. In 2020-21, Children's Services provided \$245,000 to the Canadian Mental Health Association of Alberta to support the Caregiver Connections program in six communities across the province.

### **Early Intervention in First Nations Communities Grants Program**

The Early Intervention in First Nations Communities Grant Program focuses on improving child development and well-being among Indigenous infants, children, youth and families. In 2020-21, Children's Services provided approximately \$1.3 million for 15 grants supporting the delivery of prevention, early intervention and youth support services in 12 different First Nations communities across Alberta. Due to the impacts of the pandemic, three early intervention grants were not executed as some communities had to shift to emergency services or were required to lock down due to community orders. Grants are funded in alignment with the *kâ-nâkatohkêhk miyo-ohpikinawâwasowin* (miyo Resource), an Indigenous culturally-based evaluative framework that honours the foundational beliefs and approaches of Indigenous peoples for well-being and resiliency.

### **Creating Healthy and Supportive Relationships through Mentoring**

Mentoring connects young people to resources that engage them in activities and relationships to support their growth and continued well-being. Mentors are caring adolescents or adults who help build a stronger community through the simple act of spending time with a child. Mentors meet regularly with a young person to provide support, advice, friendship, and constructive role modelling.

Young people who have healthy, supportive relationships with mentors often do better in school, are better able to deal with stressful situations, and gain the social-emotional skills they need to set

and reach goals. By creating a relationship based on trust and open communication, mentors help young people gain a sense of belonging, build self-confidence and learn new skills and passions.

In 2020-21, Children's Services invested \$1.3 million in several mentoring initiatives, including the Children & Youth in Care and Mentoring Program, the Alberta Mentoring Partnership, and the Community Partnerships Youth Grants.

### **Mentorship for Youth in Care**

The Children & Youth in Care Mentoring Program was established in 2014, with the goal of increasing the number of children and youth in care with access to a mentor.

In 2020-21, approximately \$440,000 was provided to three Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations in Alberta to operate the Children & Youth in Care Mentoring Program. Big Brothers and Big Sisters reports that for every \$1 invested in mentoring, there are \$23 in societal benefits returned.

### **Alberta Mentoring Partnership**

The Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP) is a provincial network of over 170 partners including community youth serving agencies, schools and school authorities, private foundations, Indigenous, multicultural and faith organizations, and service clubs. Children's Services, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, and in partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters Society of Edmonton (BGCBigS), co-chairs the Alberta Mentoring Leadership Team. The Leadership Team consists of various government ministries, non-profit community agencies, and service organizations that work together to strengthen Alberta's capacity to support and enhance mentoring so that young people thrive through mentoring relationships.

In 2020-21, Children's Services provided the AMP program with a \$125,000 grant to further develop mentorship programs for Albertans. In collaboration with VOICE and BGCBigS, AMP developed a marketing campaign leveraging the stories of Alberta athletes. The ratio of male to female visitors to the [albertamentors.ca](http://albertamentors.ca) website increased by 11.6 per cent as compared to the previous year. There was a significant increase in younger visitors from ages 18-24 to the program and the AMP e-newsletter subscriptions increased by 16 per cent to over 2,300. There was also an increase of 11 per cent for requests for contact from adults interested in mentoring flowed through to partner agencies.

### **Community Partnerships Youth Grants**

Community Partnerships Youth Grants support at risk and vulnerable youth, including Indigenous, immigrant and sexual and gender diverse populations. In 2020-21, Children's Services provided approximately \$740,000 so young people could receive mentoring services through Community Partnerships Youth Grants with most programs serving Calgary, Edmonton, Ponoka and Peace River.

## **Youth Mentorship**

### **Quotes taken from youth mentorship evaluations**

"I have a second family that cares about me spending time and having a healthy relationship making me feel loved and not alone."

"I have had more opportunities to try new things and go to more events that I wouldn't have if I didn't have a mentor."

"He taught me how to calm down when mad, and how to cook."

"She has helped me be more confident in myself as a person and as a leader."

## Cultural Supports

Children's Services continues to develop specific supports through partnerships with contracted agencies and community partners to ensure immigrant families can access culturally relevant services and supports, including:

- navigating government processes;
- support in meeting basic needs;
- assisting with translation;
- providing positive community activities;
- providing child care options;
- establishing parenting groups;
- educational settlement workers to help facilitate positive interactions at schools; and
- assisting child intervention workers when meeting with culturally diverse families to help build culturally relevant service plans.

Children's Services funds a Language Line to ensure clients can access a confidential, province-wide language line to help communicate their needs, in over 240 languages. This contract allows for on-demand translation services, via phone at any time for staff and their clients who may have difficulty communicating in English. Languages most asked for were Tigrinya (a language from Eastern Africa, primarily Ethiopia and Eritrea), Arabic, Spanish, Somali, and Punjabi.

## Supporting Sexual and Gender Diverse Children and Youth

Nearly one in three homeless youth in Canada identify as LGBTQ2S+. This population faces a higher risk of discrimination, violence and abuse in the shelter system than their non-LGBTQ2S+ counterparts. They are at a higher risk of mental health concerns, self-harm and suicide than the general population. LGBTQ2S+ homeless youth report greater victimization, alcohol abuse, survival sex, and suicidal ideation than their non-LGBTQ2S+ homeless peers.

In July 2020, the ministry launched the Sexual and Gender Diverse Children and Youth e-learning training for caregivers. This training provides in-depth guidance for the unique conversations and considerations caregivers of sexual and gender diverse children and youth have. Training is mandatory for foster caregivers and optional for kinship caregivers.

### 3.3 Support the successful transition for youth out of care into adulthood, focusing on educational attainment, career exploration and employment readiness.

#### Advancing Futures

Advancing Futures is a psychosocial educational bursary program that supports young adults aged 18 to 24 who have been, or continue to be, in care or receiving services under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, to access post-secondary opportunities and obtain a career. The only program of its kind in Canada, Advancing Futures takes a strengths-based approach to supporting youth and recognizes the potential of students to reach their educational goals and to overcome challenges they may face.

Advancing Futures provides transitional supports, such as mentoring and coaching, and financial supports to assist former youth in care to achieve their educational goals and obtain employment. Youth are encouraged to apply if they would like to obtain their high school General Equivalency Diploma, upgrade through adult education or enroll in a post-secondary school for a degree, diploma, certificate or trade.

In addition to addressing financial needs, students participating in Advancing Futures are linked to a program coordinator who assists the student achieve success by providing supports such as transitioning into adulthood, navigating through adult systems, learning everyday life skills and



how to be successful in school. The program recognizes that investing in the successful transition of young people out of the child intervention system results in longer-term individual and societal benefits. Recipients are also linked to mental health supports.

In 2020-21, Children's Services spent approximately \$14 million to support the 948 young adults in the Advancing Futures program. In addition, as many post-secondary programs moved to online learning in 2020-21, \$300,000 was provided to ensure students had electronic devices and internet access to continue their studies.

### **Recognition of Student Achievement**

The Alberta government established the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge scholarship to commemorate their Royal Visit to Alberta in July 2011. The scholarship recognizes the exceptional educational achievements of students who have been in care.

These \$2,000 scholarships are awarded to 25 Advancing Futures students each year based on their academic performance the previous year. In 2020-21, Advancing Futures students who received the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge Scholarship achieved an average grade point average of 3.8, with seven students achieving a 4.0 average, the highest grade possible.

### **3.4 Collaborate with Indigenous communities, leaders and partners to strengthen relationships and develop strategies to support Indigenous children, youth and families while ensuring all staff and service delivery partners have enhanced Indigenous cultural awareness.**

#### **An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families**

The Government of Canada's *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (the Federal Act) came into force on January 1, 2020. The federal act sets out national principles and standards for the delivery of child and family services to Indigenous children, youth and families. In 2020-21, Children's Services worked closely with provincial and territorial partners and with the federal government to learn more about the federal act.

Children's Services met with several Indigenous groups to have initial discussions about the act and the unique needs of each community. Children's Services began discussions with two Alberta First Nations to establish a coordination agreement for Indigenous Child and Family Services.

#### **Strengthening Relationships and Developing Collaborative Partnerships with Indigenous Communities**

Children's Services is committed to reconciliation and ensuring the issues and challenges faced by Indigenous children, youth and families are being addressed. The ministry continues to establish and strengthen essential relationships with Indigenous communities, leaders and organizations.

In 2020-21, Children's Services established the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Tribal Council (G4)-Children's Services Protocol Table under the Government of Alberta-G4 Protocol Agreement and provided \$150,000 to support facilitation and coordination of the Table. The Table supports collaborative dialogue on matters of mutual concern.

Children's Services continued work with the Blackfoot Confederacy (BFC) through the BFC-Children's Services Child and Family Services Protocol Table that supports ongoing collaboration between Children's Services and the BFC to address child and family service issues facing BFC member Nations. Children's Services provided a \$150,000 grant to support BFC facilitation and coordination of the Table. In September 2020, a jointly developed work plan was signed by the Minister and the BFC Chiefs.

Work continued with the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) through the MNA-Children's Services Sub-Table established under the MNA-Government of Alberta 10-Year Framework Agreement. In 2020-21, the sub-table co-developed the three-year Broad Approach to Child and Family Services outlining key outcomes necessary to advance the work of the sub-table. Children's Services provided a three-year funding commitment of \$1.51 million to the MNA to support the Broad Approach.

### Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework

The Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework and its Learning Development Pathway identifies experiential Indigenous cultural training required for all Children's Services staff to increase knowledge, skills and a better understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, worldviews, challenges, and resilience. Training developed under this framework was designed in collaboration with Indigenous communities and with the support of Indigenous Elders, partners and thought leaders.

Children's Services staff learn how best to foster respectful and collaborative relationships with Indigenous people. This knowledge will affect behavior and practice, leading to more respectful and meaningful approaches in serving Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities.

As of March 31, 2021, 82 per cent or 2,209 Children's Services staff completed the basic requirements for the Foundations Pathway. 24 per cent or 640 staff completed three-and-four-day cultural understanding training under the Relationship and Culture Pathway that is either Cree based training, Blackfoot based training or Child Intervention Practitioner training – Working with Indigenous Children, Families and Communities. In addition, 32 staff attended a half-day Métis 101 training with Metis Settlements General Council. 92 per cent of Children's Services employees who completed more intensive training under the Relationship and Culture Pathway indicate they have a better understanding of Indigenous pre-contact life, colonization, and the contemporary obstacles that face Indigenous people today and how this influences their work.

These training opportunities provide a safe and engaging learning environment for staff to participate in experiential learning about Indigenous cultures. Training has been designed and implemented to support staff throughout the ministry to deliver services in a way that acknowledges historical trauma, community strengths, and promotes better outcomes for Indigenous children, youth, families and communities.

To continue to support the Indigenous Cultural Understanding Framework, the ministry provided contracts to Blue Quills University, Maskwacis Cultural College, Metis Settlements General Council, Cultural Solutions, Omanitew and the Métis Nation of Alberta to provide Indigenous cultural understanding training. Delivery of training by Indigenous experts and Elders from various

### Actions that Support the Priorities of the Government of Alberta Strategic Plan

#### Key Priority 2:

Making life better for Albertans

#### Objective 6:

Partnering with Indigenous Peoples to pursue opportunities

- The Minister of Children's Services established the Stoney Nakoda-Tsuut'ina Tribal Council (G4)-CS Protocol Sub-Table under the Family Services Table of the GoA-G4 Protocol Agreement. The sub-table supports collaborative dialogue on matters of mutual concern.
- Children's Services is collaborating with Community and Social Services and Alberta Health to enhance the Family Supports and Child Development (FSCD) supports and services to children and youth both on and off reserve.

communities acknowledges that Indigenous peoples can speak for themselves and are in the best position to share their own community knowledge and cultural teachings.

### Indigenous Speaker Series

The Indigenous Speaker Series is a knowledge sharing opportunity for Children’s Services staff to gain insight and understanding of Indigenous world views and ways of knowing, doing, and being. This series helps shift how programs and services are being delivered and to better serve Indigenous peoples and communities. It also helps assist in informing responsible policy formation that includes an Indigenous lens as well as providing opportunities for relationship building with Indigenous peoples and communities.

- Indigenous speakers - providing ministry staff the opportunity to hear directly from Indigenous speakers.
- Indigenous knowledge - sharing Indigenous knowledge, world views and ways of being, knowing, and doing, in order to inform ministry policy, practices, programs, and services.
- Reconciliation - working with Indigenous peoples and communities and what reconciliation means and how it can be supported.
- Learning - creating a learning environment where participants gain greater understanding of Indigenous peoples.
- Service Delivery - How programs and services might shift to better serve Indigenous people and communities.

In 2020-21, approximately 100 staff from across the province participated in each of the four virtual Indigenous Speakers Series.

### Speaker Series

What participants had to say:

“I have attended a few of the sessions and have thoroughly enjoyed them. Any opportunity to increase my learning to serve and work with my clients in a more culturally appropriate way is appreciated. Considering the overrepresentation of Indigenous families involved in our system, it’s so important for us to have greater understanding of the communities from their own views. Please offer more sessions!”

“Thank you for providing us with these opportunities to respectfully understand and improve our practices to support indigenous children, youth and families. We need to dedicate our time to this work. All speakers have been excellent.”

### 3.5 Work with ministries to increase access to supports for Indigenous families who have children with disabilities.

#### Ensuring Children with Disabilities Receive Support

Children’s Services works collaboratively with Community and Social Services, Alberta Health, Indigenous partners and other stakeholders to provide children with disabilities the supports they need. This includes Community and Social Services’ Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) program and the Supporting Alberta’s Children, Youth, Parents/Guardians with Disabilities, a Cross-ministry Protocol.

The protocol is a framework for collaboration to support the ongoing work across Children’s Services and Community and Social Services. This protocol brings together relevant programs and services to best support children, youth and parents/guardians with disabilities. Children’s Services works in partnership with FSCD and families who are involved with both programs, to provide services mandated under *Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act*, when required. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Children’s Services worked collaboratively with Community and Social Services to educate frontline ministry staff on policy changes to the Family Support for Children with Disabilities program.



**Performance Measure 3.a:****Percentage of youth receiving supports from the Advancing Futures program who successfully completed their planned studies**

Prior Years' Results				2020-21 Target	2020-21 Actual
2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20		
85%	81%	85%	88%	85%	89%

This performance measure tracks the success of youth who have completed their planned studies. The Advancing Futures program provides support to youth in transition as they 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, as they transition to adulthood and pursue post-secondary studies with the goal to obtain a career.

Last year, 1,136 applications were received and 948 students were approved to receive a bursary to pursue post-secondary studies. Of the total 948 students, 848 successfully completed their studies equal to 89 per cent of Advancing Futures students successfully completed their educational studies. Advancing Futures students are successful because they receive a high level of skill development training, as well as social and emotional support from the Program Coordinators. This measure exceeded its target by four per cent, which demonstrates how well Children's Services is addressing the needs of youth transitioning out of government care into post-secondary.

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, as they transition to adulthood and pursue post-secondary studies with the goal to obtain a career.

Reasons a youth may withdraw or be terminated from a program 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 youths.

**Performance Indicator 3.b:****Percentage of young adults who transition out of child intervention at age 18 and access additional supports through Support and Financial Assistance Agreements**

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
<b>Indigenous</b>	92%	90%	90%	89%	90%
<b>Non-Indigenous</b>	90%	90%	91%	89%	89%

This indicator describes the percentage of young adults who turn 18 years old while receiving child intervention services who entered a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement. The focus is on those who have received child intervention services and are working towards independence with their goals, development and functional ability.

In 2020-21, the number of young adults that ended child intervention involvement on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday decreased from 343 to 333 for Indigenous young adults (3 per cent) and from 234 to 196 for non-Indigenous young adults (16 per cent). At the same time the number of young adults accessing Support and Financial Assistance Agreements (SFAA) decreased from 308 to 299 for Indigenous young adults (3 per cent) and from 208 to 174 for non-Indigenous young adults (16 per cent). Consequently, the net results remain stable at 90 per cent for Indigenous youth and 89 per cent for non-Indigenous youth.

The SFAA program provides financial assistance, support from a caseworker and other assistance such as life skills and community connections that help young people reach their goals of independence.

## Performance Measure and Indicator Methodology

### Performance Measure 1.a:

#### Percentage of cases opening to child intervention without involvement in the last year

This performance measure describes the percentage of files that opened for children and youth without child intervention involvement in the last 12 months in a given fiscal year. It incorporates children and youth receiving services in care and not in care.

This is calculated separately for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{total number of children who opened a new file with child intervention during a fiscal year and no previous closure within the last 12 months}}{\text{total number of children who opened a file with child intervention during a fiscal year}} \times 100$$

Preliminary data is available from a live dataset at least one month after the end of the fiscal year. Since the dataset is a live source, the data and results generated are subject to change as more information is entered into the system. Data is considered preliminary for 26 months, after which the data is frozen for yearly reporting.

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

### Performance Measure 1.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.

This is calculated separately for Indigenous and non-Indigenous children using the following formula:

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

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

### Performance Indicator 1.c:

#### Children receiving child intervention services as a percentage of the child population in Alberta

This performance indicator shows the percentage of children, aged 0-17 years receiving child intervention services, of the estimated total child population in Alberta, in a given calendar year.

The percentage is calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{number of children (0-17) who had an active child intervention legal authority during a calendar year}}{\text{estimated number of children between the ages 0-17 in Alberta during a calendar year}} \times 100$$

The reported number of children receiving child intervention services and the total child population in Alberta are subject to change as source information is entered into the system.

Source: [Child Intervention Case Information Online](#)  
 Statistics Canada Table: 17-10-0005-01 (formerly CANSIM 051-0001) – Population estimates on July 1, by age and sex

**Performance Indicator 1.d:  
Percentage of Indigenous children in kinship or foster care who are placed with Indigenous families**

This performance indicator shows the percentage of Indigenous children and youth receiving culturally appropriate services through foster care or kinship care of the total number of Indigenous children and youth in foster or kinship care in a given fiscal year. A foster or kinship care is determined to be Indigenous if the home is denoted as Indigenous or caregiver's racial origin is identified as Indigenous in the Child Youth Information Module or Intervention Services Information System.

The percentage is calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{total number of Indigenous children and youth in foster or kinship care who reside with an Indigenous foster or kinship care family in a fiscal year}}{\text{total number of Indigenous children and youth in foster or kinship care in a fiscal year}} \times 100$$

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

**Performance Measure 2.a:  
Percentage increase in the number of licensed and approved child care spaces**

This performance measure shows the percentage increase in the number of licensed and approved 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 for each child.

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

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

---

Source: [Child Care Information System](#)

**Performance Indicator 2.b:  
Licensed and approved child care spaces**

This performance indicator shows the total number of approved child care spaces available in a given fiscal year. Spaces indicates the maximum number of children that a child care centres can accommodate.

This performance indicator is typically the count available at the end of March in a given year based on the claim reports submitted by the child care programs.

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Source: [Child Care Information System](#)

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**Performance Indicator 2.c:  
Licensed and approved child care enrolment**

This performance indicator shows the number of children enrolled in licensed and approved child care programs and the percentage of enrolment of the total child care spaces available (performance indicator 2.b) in a given fiscal year.

This performance indicator is typically available at the end of March in a given year, using claim reports submitted by the child care programs. Preschool enrolment data is unavailable within the Child Care Information System (CCIS) for March 2020 and March 2021 due to funding changes that impacted reporting requirements for preschools. Therefore, March 2020 preschool enrolment was approximated using December 2019 preschool data, March 2021 was estimated using the Weekly COVID Enrolment Survey March 22-26.

As the month-over-month change in space is relatively small, the effect of using the December count instead of the March count on the 2019-20 result is minimal. Further, validation checks confirmed the Child Care Information System (CCIS) and the Weekly COVID Enrolment Survey yield consistent results with a negligible margin of error. As such, 2020-21 results can be compared with previous years. The percentage of total enrolment is calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{number of children that used child care services in a fiscal year}}{\text{total number of available child care spaces in a fiscal year}} \times 100$$

Source: [Child Care Information System](#)

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**Performance Indicator 2.d:  
Average annual Child Care Subsidy caseload**

This performance indicator shows the 12-month average of the number of subsidies paid to families in a given fiscal year. However, 2020-21 results was calculated by using March 2021 data due to extreme month to month variations which negatively skewed the annual average. The subsidy caseload numbers include full and partial subsidies.

To receive subsidy funding for qualifying children, the child care operator must report the number of hours each eligible child was in attendance. The details of the number of children in attendance are submitted as part of a monthly claims report.

Source: [Child Care Information System](#)

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**Performance Measure 3.a:  
Percentage of youth receiving supports from the Advancing Futures program who successfully completed their planned studies**

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

The data for this performance measure is based on the fiscal year start and end dates (April 1 to March 31). The total recipients identifies students who have been 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. The students who finished their planned

studies within the fiscal year or were in studies this fiscal year and will be continuing the following year are considered as those who successfully completed their planned studies.

This performance measure is calculated using the following formula:

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

---

[Source: Bursary Information Module](#)

**Performance Indicator 3.b:**

**Percentage of young adults who transition out of child intervention at age 18 and access additional supports through Support and Financial Assistance Agreements**

This performance indicator shows the percentage of young adults who turn 18 years old while receiving child intervention services (aging out) who entered a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement in a given fiscal year. The indicator helps to show an important part of the continuum of services and care provided in Alberta, with a focus on those who have received child intervention services planning for and working toward independence in keeping with their goals, development, and functional ability.

The percentage is calculated dividing the total number of youth aging out and having a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement in place by the total number of youth aging out.

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{total number of youth aging out and having a Support and Financial Assistance Agreement}}{\text{total number of youth aging out}}$$

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

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## Financial Information

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## Ministry Financial Highlights

### Statement of Revenues and Expenses (unaudited)

Year ended March 31, 2021

	2021		2020	Change from	
	Budget	Actual	Actual	Budget	2020 Actual
	<i>(in thousands)</i>				
<b>Revenues</b>					
Services to First Nations Reserves	\$ 45,678	\$ 42,953	\$ 41,736	\$ (2,725)	\$ 1,217
Other Federal Transfers	72,593	83,642	75,385	11,049	8,257
Premiums, Fees and Licences	50	60	123	10	(63)
Other Revenue	5,730	31,829	8,941	26,099	22,888
Ministry total	124,051	158,484	126,185	34,433	32,299
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	-	(37)	-	(37)	(37)
Adjusted ministry total	124,051	158,447	126,185	34,396	32,262
<b>Programs</b>					
Ministry Support Services	6,086	5,790	6,303	(296)	(513)
Child Intervention	867,069	850,665	866,044	(16,404)	(15,379)
Child Care	393,986	379,158	408,749	(14,828)	(29,591)
Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth	95,780	89,455	101,509	(6,325)	(12,054)
Policy Innovation and Indigenous Connections	9,715	6,452	7,363	(3,263)	(911)
Alberta Child Benefit	45,500	48,297	171,813	2,797	(123,516)
Alberta Child and Family Benefit	230,000	219,314	-	(10,686)	219,314
Ministry total	1,648,136	1,599,131	1,561,781	(49,005)	37,350
Inter-ministry consolidation adjustments	(12,000)	(9,432)	(13,730)	2,568	4,298
Adjusted ministry total	1,636,136	1,589,699	1,548,051	(46,437)	41,648
Annual deficit before inter-ministry adjustments	(1,524,085)	(1,440,647)	(1,435,596)	83,438	(5,051)
Inter-ministry adjustments	12,000	9,395	13,730	(2,605)	(4,335)
<b>Adjusted annual deficit</b>	<b>\$(1,512,085)</b>	<b>\$(1,431,252)</b>	<b>\$(1,421,866)</b>	<b>\$ 80,833</b>	<b>\$ (9,386)</b>



## Revenue and Expense Highlights

### Revenues

Ministry revenue was \$158.4 million, approximately \$32.3 million higher than 2019-20 and \$34.5 million higher than *Budget 2020*.

#### *Compared to Budget 2020*

- Higher revenues were primarily due to increases in Other Revenue with a reallocation of 2019-20 federal bilateral funding for Child Care, Early Learning Child Care, and Early Intervention programs and service provider contract surpluses. Other Federal Transfers for Child Special Allowances also increased due to one-time COVID-19 supplement funding and annual increases in the program.

#### *Compared to 2019-20 Actual*

- Higher revenues were primarily due to increases in Other Revenue with a reallocation of 2019-20 federal bilateral funding provided for Child Care, Early Learning Child Care, and Early Intervention programs and service provider contract surpluses. Other Federal Transfers for Child Special Allowances also increased due to one-time COVID-19 supplement funding and annual increases in the program.

### Expenses

The total ministry operating expense was \$1,599.1 million in 2020-21, \$37.4 million or 2.4 per cent higher than 2019-20 and \$49.0 million or 3 per cent lower than budget.

#### *Compared to Budget 2020*

- Child Intervention expense of \$850.7 million was \$16.4 million lower than budget primarily due to lower than anticipated average cost per case because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Child care expense of \$379.1 million was \$14.8 million lower than budget due to reduced operating levels in child care programs because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Alberta Family and Child Benefit expense of \$219.3 million was \$10.7 million lower than budget due to lower than expected number of eligible families.
- Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth expense of \$89.4 million was \$6.3 million lower than budget due to delayed Family Resource Network program delivery because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Policy, Innovation & Indigenous Connections expense of \$6.5 million was \$3.3 million lower than budget with reduced stakeholder meetings due to COVID-19, salary reductions due to recruitment delays, and lower than anticipated Appeal Panel activity.
- Ministry Support Services expense of \$5.8 million was \$0.3 million lower than budget.
- Alberta Child Benefit expense of \$48.3 million was \$2.8 million higher than budget due to higher than anticipated uptake in the program.

#### *Compared to 2019-20 Actual*

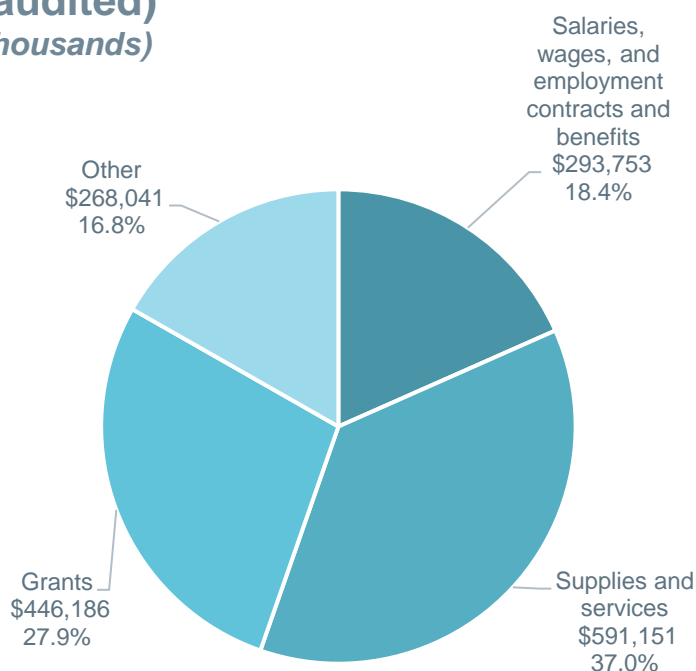
- Alberta Family Child Benefit expenses was \$219.3 million. This is a new program introduced in the 2020-21 fiscal year to replace the Alberta Child Benefit program with a focus on lower income families while maintaining incentives for families to join and remain in the workforce.

- Alberta Child Benefit expense was \$48.3 million, a decrease of \$123.4 million or 71.9 per cent from 2019-20 due to the conclusion of the program in June 2020.
- Child care expense was \$379.1 million, a decrease of \$29.6 million or 7.2 per cent from 2019-20 due to reduced operating levels in child care programs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Child Intervention expense was \$850.7 million, a decrease of \$15.4 million or 1.8 per cent from 2019-20 primarily due to reduced average cost per case and lower salary and benefit costs because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth expense was \$89.4 million, a decrease of \$12.0 million or 11.9 per cent from 2019-20 primarily due to the consolidation of the Early Intervention and Prevention program through the Family Resource Networks.
- Policy, Innovation and Indigenous Connections expense was \$6.5 million, a decrease of \$0.9 million or 12.4 per cent from 2019-20.
- Ministry Support Services expenses was \$5.8 million, a decrease of \$0.5 million or 8.1 per cent.

## 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.

### 2021 Actual (unaudited) (in thousands)



- The ministry's largest operating expense was Supplies and Services, which totaled \$591.1 million, made up 37.0 per cent of total operating expenses and was primarily in the Child Intervention program (\$571.8 million). Included in Supplies and Services was approximately \$416.8 million in contract payments paid primarily to contracted service providers who provided services directly to Albertans on behalf of the ministry.
- The next largest operating expense was Grants, which totaled \$446.2 million (27.9 per cent), primarily for the Child Care program.
- Expenditures for salaries, wages and employee benefits totaled \$293.8 million (18.4 per cent) and were primarily in the Child Intervention program.
- Other expenses totaled \$268.0 million (16.8 per cent), which are primarily for the Alberta Family Child Benefit and Alberta Child Benefit programs.

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## Trust Funds Under Administration

*(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.

At March 31, 2021, the trust funds under administration were as follows:

	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>
Child Resources Rebate Trust Fund	\$ 664	\$ 663

**Statement of Remissions, Compromises, Write-offs**

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>
<b>Remissions</b>	under Section 21 of the <i>Financial Administration Act</i> .	\$ -
<b>Compromises</b>	under Section 22 of the <i>Financial Administration Act</i> .	-
<b>Bankruptcies:</b>		-
<b>Write-Offs:</b>		
	Child Care Subsidy	690
	Other	5
<b>Sub total</b>		695
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 695</b>

## Lapses/Encumbrances

	Voted Estimate <sup>(1)</sup>	Supplementary Estimate	Adjustments <sup>(2)</sup>	Voted Estimate	Voted Actuals <sup>(3)</sup>	Over Expended (Unexpended)
	(in thousands)					
<b>Program - Operating Expense</b>						
1 Ministry Support Services						
1.1 Minister's Office	\$ 789	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 789	\$ 638	\$ (151)
1.2 Deputy Minister's Office	780	-	-	780	909	129
1.3 Strategic Services	508	-	-	508	420	(88)
1.4 Corporate Services	4,009	-	-	4,009	3,955	(54)
	<u>6,086</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,086</u>	<u>5,922</u>	<u>(164)</u>
2 Child Intervention						
2.1 Program Planning and Delivery	8,982	-	-	8,982	7,383	(1,599)
2.2 Child Intervention Services	563,521	3,600	-	567,121	559,041	(8,080)
2.3 Supports for Permanency	67,198	-	-	67,198	67,756	558
2.4 Kinship & Foster Care Support	225,788	-	-	225,788	215,016	(10,772)
	<u>865,489</u>	<u>3,600</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>869,089</u>	<u>849,196</u>	<u>(19,893)</u>
3 Child Care						
3.1 Child Care Subsidy and Supports	279,958	84,234	-	364,192	273,933	(90,259)
3.2 Child Care Worker Supports	114,028	(2,823)	-	111,205	105,019	(6,186)
	<u>393,986</u>	<u>81,411</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>475,397</u>	<u>378,952</u>	<u>(96,445)</u>
4 Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth						
4.1 Early Intervention and Early Childhood Development	81,338	-	-	81,338	72,775	(8,563)
4.2 Youth in Transition	14,442	-	-	14,442	16,568	2,126
	<u>95,780</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>95,780</u>	<u>89,343</u>	<u>(6,437)</u>
5 Policy Innovation & Indigenous Connections						
5.1 Policy and Innovation	7,079	(650)	-	6,429	4,646	(1,783)
5.2 Indigenous Connections	2,636	-	-	2,636	1,846	(790)
	<u>9,715</u>	<u>(650)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>9,065</u>	<u>6,492</u>	<u>(2,573)</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,371,056</b>	<b>\$ 84,361</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$1,455,417</b>	<b>\$ 1,329,905</b>	<b>\$ (125,512)</b>
<b>(Lapse)/Encumbrance</b>						<b>\$ (125,512)</b>
<b>Program - Capital Investment</b>						
2 Child Intervention						
2.2 Child Intervention Services	483	-	-	483	42	(441)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 483</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 483</b>	<b>\$ 42</b>	<b>\$ (441)</b>
<b>(Lapse)/Encumbrance</b>						<b>\$ (441)</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> As per "Expense Vote by Program" and "Capital Investment Vote by Program" page 45 of the 2020-21 Government Estimates.

<sup>(2)</sup> 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.

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

## Annual Report Extracts and Other Statutory Reports

### ***Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act***

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

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

There was one disclosure of wrongdoing filed with the public interest disclosure office for Children's Services from the period April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021. After reviewing the disclosure it was determined an investigation was not warranted and the file was closed.