

BUDGET 2023

GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA | 2023-26

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# Ministry Business Plan Children's Services

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# Children's Services

## Business Plan 2023-26

### Ministry Fact Sheet – Mandate and Structure

The Ministry of Children's Services provides and invests in programs and services for children, youth, and their families to live safely and succeed in Alberta. Affordable and accessible child care, as well as support for marginalized children, youth, and families are at the core of the ministry's mandate.

Continuing to stand up for Albertans by ensuring children are protected, youth are supported, and families are resilient, Children's Services remains dedicated to modernize and efficiently deliver programs and services. Children's Services is on course to reduce fees and increase access to affordable, high-quality, and inclusive child care so families can return to work and participate in the economy. Mentoring and support services are available to youth in care transitioning to healthy, productive adults. Early intervention services build resiliency and help families thrive.

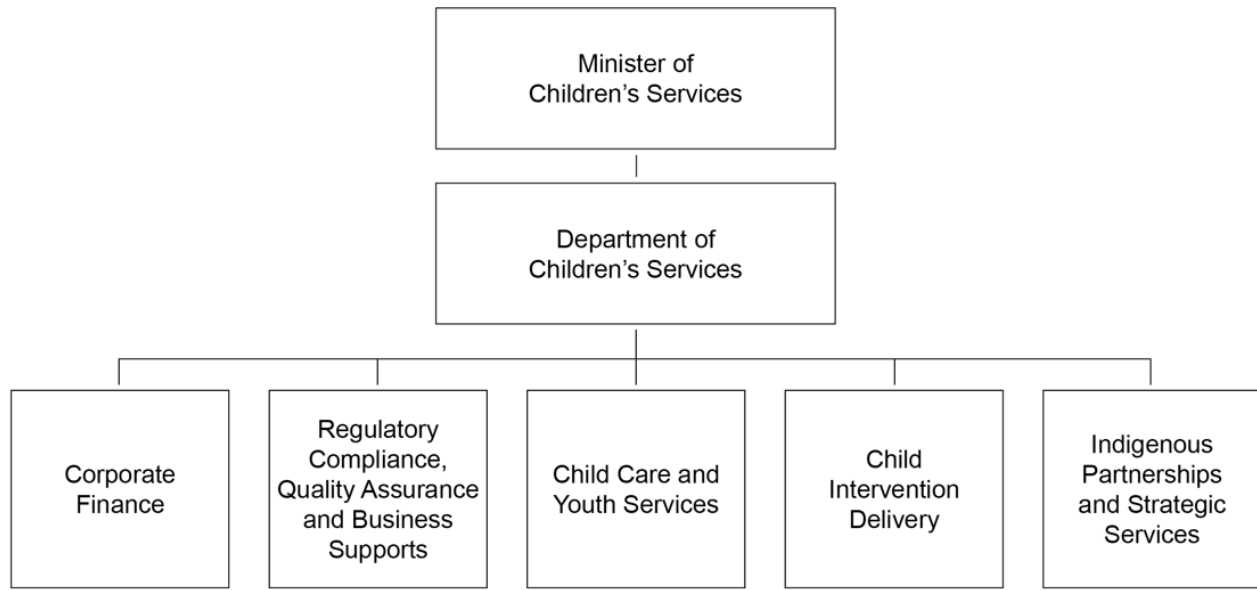
Children's Services programs and services include:

- Prevention, early intervention services through community programs such as Family Resource Networks and post-intervention supports;
- Licensing and monitoring of child care programs;
- Supports for the child care workforce;
- Supports to ensure the inclusion of children with diverse needs in child care settings;
- Funding to reduce child care fees for parents;
- Youth in care mentorship;
- Indigenous child and family connections;
- Intervention for children at home and in care;
- Adoption, post adoption registry, and guardianship services; and
- Financial supports, including child care grant funding and the Advancing Futures Bursary.

Child care in Alberta will become increasingly affordable in the next three years as the ministry continues to reduce fees through implementation of the five-year Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. Parents and caregivers can participate in training, education, or work knowing they can afford child care. The ministry supports child care operators to provide access to quality, inclusive, and affordable child care for Alberta families.

Through collaboration, Children's Services focuses on the importance of the child's cultural, linguistic, religious, and spiritual upbringing and heritage. This is achieved through collaboration with other ministries, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, urban Indigenous communities, other levels of government, agencies, and civil society organizations.

The ministry provides services, supports, and resources to protect children and youth from harmful situations including abuse, neglect, or those that put them in need of intervention. The child's best interests and physical, psychological, and emotional safety and well-being are most important when determining the best care options and supports if the child is placed in care. This includes kinship care with a family member, foster care, guardianship, and adoption. The ministry is committed to honouring the cultural aspects of communities and the child's involvement in those communities, recognizing the importance of lasting relationships with family and friends, and collaborating with broader community services, school boards, primary care providers, parents, and caregivers.



A more detailed description of Children’s Services and its programs and initiatives can be found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/childrens-services.aspx>.

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

Ministry business plans should be considered in conjunction with all budget documents - including the Fiscal Plan, Government Strategic Plan, and Estimates - which work together to provide a complete overview of government’s commitment to responsible fiscal management.

# 2023-26 Business Plan

## Outcome 1

**Access to early learning and child care options enable parents and families to participate in training, education, or the workforce**

Significant investments make high-quality child care available and affordable for families and promote a sustainable future for the early learning and child care sector.

### Key Objectives

- 1.1 Increase access to child care through initiatives that support affordable, quality, safe, and inclusive programs enabling parents to participate in and support Alberta’s economic recovery.
- 1.2 Enhance quality licensed child care through workforce investments that strengthen the recruitment and retention of skilled early childhood educators and support their capacity to deliver quality child care.

### Initiatives Supporting Key Objectives

- In 2023-24, allocate up to \$59.3 million to support the expansion of licensed child care spaces through a mix of private (for-profit) and not-for-profit providers and in areas of high demand and high need.
- In 2023-24, the ministry will allocate \$989.6 million towards affordable child care for families with children enrolled in licensed programs by providing parent subsidies and program affordability grants to an average of \$15 per day.
- In 2023-24, \$229.4 million is allocated to support the child care workforce through child care certification, professional development, and wage top-ups.

## Performance Metrics

1.a **Performance Measure: percentage change in the number of licensed child care spaces.** This includes daycare, family day home, out-of-school care, preschool, innovative, and group family child care programs. Child care programs safely operate while leveraging federal investments for focused space creation.

In 2021-22, there was a 6 per cent increase in the number of licensed and active child care spaces.

Targets	2023-24	11%	2024-25	10%	2025-26	11%
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1.b **Performance Indicator: enrollment in Facility-Based Child Care programs, Family Day Home, Innovative and Group Family Child Care.**

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Spaces <sup>1</sup>	114,436	121,671	127,860	136,867
(preschool)	(17,188)	(16,696)	(15,609)	(15,359)
Enrollment <sup>1</sup>	92,254	97,553	71,579	101,409
(preschool)	(13,546)	(11,789) <sup>2</sup>	(12,678) <sup>3</sup>	(18,017) <sup>4</sup>
Rate of Enrollment <sup>1</sup>	80.6%	80.2%	56.0%	74.1%
(preschool)	(78.8%)	(70.6%)	(81.2%)	(117.3%)
Children receiving subsidy	27,632	28,320	22,967 <sup>5</sup>	55,274 <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Preschool are reported separately in parentheses. <sup>2</sup>December 2019 data used for March 2020; <sup>3</sup>March 22-26, 2021 weekly Child Care Attendance survey data used to estimate for March 2021; <sup>4</sup>Preschool enrollment data was available within the CCIS data system since September 2021, CCIS system data used for March 2022; <sup>5</sup>March data used in place of the annual average since COVID-19.

## Outcome 2

### The safety, resiliency, and cultural connections of children, youth, and families are supported and children and youth are protected

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

#### Key Objectives

- 2.1 Provide targeted supports for youth to successfully transition from government care into adulthood and build on available support services, mentorship, educational attainment, and employment readiness.
- 2.2 Work with First Nations and Government of Canada to implement *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*.
- 2.3 Improve access to a range of prevention and early intervention programs and services for children, youth, and their families that support child safety, well-being, development, and caregiver capacity and support.
- 2.4 Continue to combat rising costs due to inflation by providing financial payments to Alberta families with children.

#### Initiatives Supporting Key Objectives

- In 2023-24, \$956.9 million is allocated to support youth with child intervention involvement, transition to adulthood, mentoring supports, and the Advancing Futures Bursary program.
- In 2023-24, \$63.3 million is allocated to support prevention and early intervention services through the Family Resource Network program.
- In 2023-24, \$345 million in benefits is allocated through the Alberta Child and Family Benefit to provide direct financial assistance to lower and middle-income families with children under 18.

## Performance Metrics

**2.a Performance Measure: percentage of youth receiving supports from the Advancing Futures program who successfully complete their planned studies.** This demonstrates how well the ministry is addressing the needs of youth transitioning from government care to post-secondary education.

In 2021-22, 86 per cent of youth receiving supports successfully completed their planned studies.

Targets	2023-24	89%	2024-25	89%	2025-26	89%
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**2.b Performance Measure: percentage of children in care placed in family-based care.** This demonstrates the ministry's commitment to prioritizing the best interests of children by placing them in kinship care, foster care, permanency placements, and with parents and relatives.

In 2021-22, 87 per cent of Indigenous children and 86 per cent of non-Indigenous children were placed in family-based care.

Targets	2023-24	87%	2024-25	87%	2025-26	88%
Indigenous	2023-24	87%	2024-25	87%	2025-26	88%
Non-Indigenous	2023-24	87%	2024-25	87%	2025-26	88%

**2.c Performance Indicator: number of First Nation children and youth served by Delegated First Nations Agencies (DFNAs).** There is a significant proportion of First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services by DFNAs through 19 Agreements with 37 of the 48 First Nations in Alberta. This includes children and youth residing on-Reserve within the boundaries of their reserve and off-Reserve in circumstances where DFNA provisions are in place.

According to the federal Act, Indigenous governing body law can have force of law as federal law when a Coordination Agreement is reached or reasonable efforts are made to do so during the period of one year after the day on which the request was made. In 2021-22, Children’s Services transferred 150 First Nation children, youth and young adults to an Indigenous governing body.

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services (not in care and in care) from a DFNA <sup>1</sup>	1,668	1,887	1,904	1,920	2,033
First Nation children and youth receiving child intervention services <sup>1</sup>	5,603	6,239	6,382	6,350	6,302
Proportion of First Nation children and youth served by a DFNA	30%	30%	30%	30%	32%

<sup>1</sup>Data reflects monthly average.

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

(thousands of dollars)

	Comparable		2023-24 Estimate	2024-25 Target	2025-26 Target
	2022-23 Budget	2022-23 Forecast			
<b>REVENUE</b>					
Services to First Nations Reserves	45,678	50,800	<b>45,678</b>	45,678	45,678
Other Federal Transfers	769,022	769,022	<b>972,179</b>	1,097,051	1,261,651
Premiums, Fees and Licences	55	55	<b>55</b>	55	55
Other Revenue	7,699	7,699	<b>7,699</b>	7,699	7,699
Consolidated Total	822,454	827,576	<b>1,025,611</b>	1,150,483	1,315,083
<b>EXPENSE</b>					
Ministry Support Services	5,928	5,928	<b>6,083</b>	6,132	6,132
Child Intervention	832,371	828,871	<b>871,379</b>	889,938	907,920
Child Care	1,076,132	1,072,632	<b>1,278,282</b>	1,403,324	1,572,924
Early Intervention Services for Children and Youth	143,220	143,220	<b>148,803</b>	151,856	154,919
Indigenous Partnerships and Strategic Services	10,237	10,237	<b>10,237</b>	10,237	10,237
Alberta Child and Family Benefit	335,000	335,000	<b>345,000</b>	355,000	365,000
Affordability Supports and Inflation Relief – Families with Children	-	270,700	<b>271,200</b>	-	-
Ministry Total	2,402,888	2,666,588	<b>2,930,984</b>	2,816,487	3,017,132
Inter-Ministry Consolidation Adjustment	(13,700)	(13,700)	<b>(13,700)</b>	(13,700)	(13,700)
Consolidated Total	2,389,188	2,652,888	<b>2,917,284</b>	2,802,787	3,003,432
Net Operating Result	(1,566,734)	(1,825,312)	<b>(1,891,673)</b>	(1,652,304)	(1,688,349)
<b>CAPITAL INVESTMENT</b>					
Child Intervention	-	4,021	-	-	-
Child Care	7,500	11,000	<b>10,000</b>	10,000	5,000
Consolidated Total	7,500	15,021	<b>10,000</b>	10,000	5,000