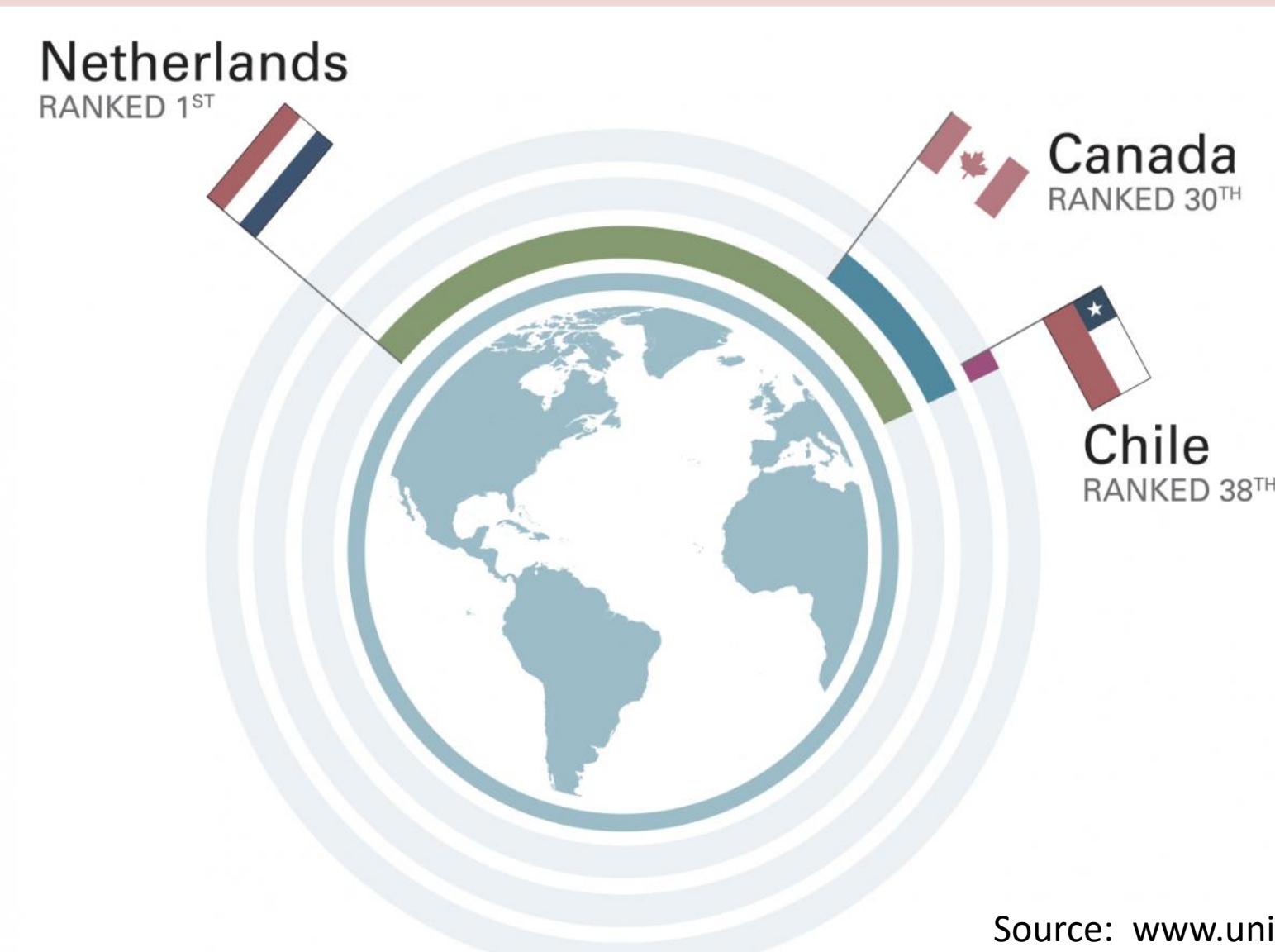


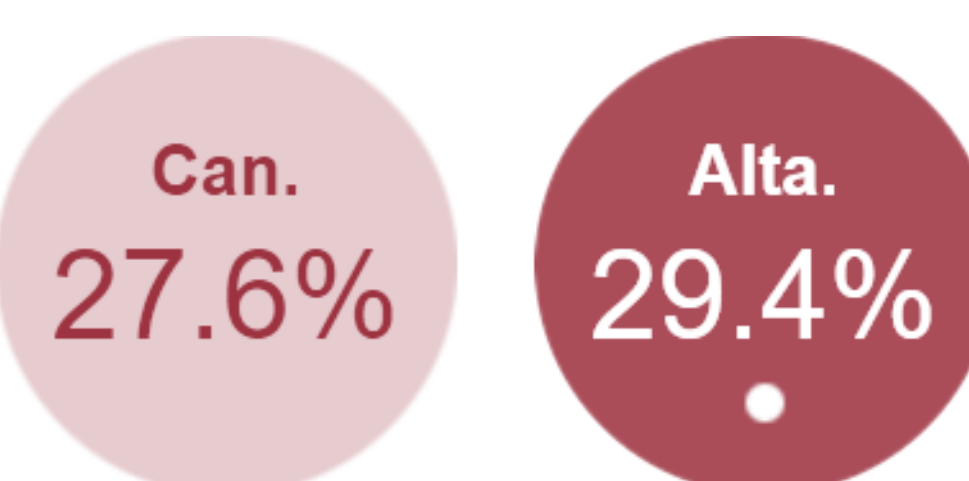
Measure What Matters: Towards Aligning Policies and Service Delivery with Child/Youth Health and Well-being in Alberta – Results from an Environmental Scan

The issues



Source: www.unicef.ca/en/unicef-report-card-16

Canada is ranked 30th out of 38 countries in relation to child health and well-being outcomes



Source: <https://www.cihi.ca/en/indicators/children-vulnerable-in-areas-of-early-development>

Almost 30% of children in Alberta are delayed in one or more areas of development at school entry.

There are few multi-sectoral or overarching child health and well-being policies or governance structures in place in Alberta



There is limited monitoring of child health and well-being outcomes and system performance across sectors in Alberta due to lack of regular comprehensive data reporting

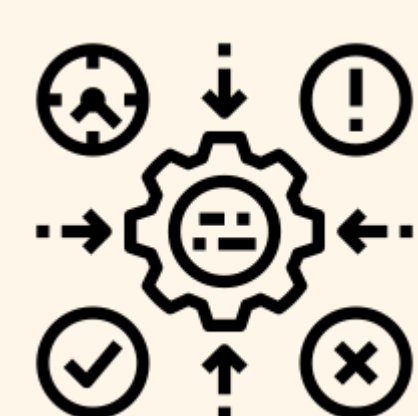


Context



Defining Child and Youth Health and Well-being

Well-being is a multi-faceted concept involving multiple aspects of life. It is often referred to as an over-arching concept used to refer to quality of life. The concept of well-being acknowledges that people's lives are complex, and that quality of life depends on a range of different things, each bringing their own value and meaning, and is often determined by material resources, physical and mental health, skills and abilities, social and cultural lives and connections with others.



Determinants, Environments and Ecologies

To get a full picture of the well-being of children, various determinants and environments need to be taken into account. These include individual and family health and well-being outcomes across various domains, as well as influences such as home life, social connections, community, school life, neighbourhood, physical environment, policy context, global environment and climate.



Why Investing in Children is Important

There is substantial and recently reviewed neurobiological and socio-behavioural evidence on the critical and sensitive development that occurs prenatally and through early childhood. Early experiences (shaped by social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors through gene-environment interaction) powerfully influence development and the ability for children to thrive through childhood and adulthood. Adolescence presents another key window of developmental opportunity in which lifelong nutrition, exercise, substance use, mental health and interpersonal relationship patterns can be laid. From a policy and economic perspective, the Heckman Curve explains how these investments result in high returns in Human Capital.



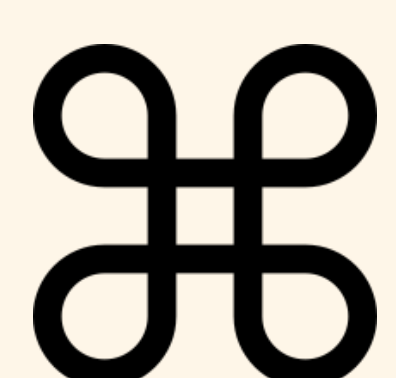
Policy Approaches

Public policy can be a powerful intermediary between children's conditions and outcomes. Governments have an important role to play in providing a policy environment that prioritizes children. Policy makers can positively contribute to improving outcomes for children by recognizing different determinants and influences of health and well-being, adhering to principles of good governance, using evidence for sound decision-making, ensuring effective implementation and collaborating with civil society in various sectors.



Monitoring Child Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and System Performance

To ensure impactful policy-making and effective implementation, health and well-being outcomes and system performance needs to be measured and monitored on a regular basis. This allows for the identification of gaps, changes and policy levers. Different monitoring approaches have been implemented internationally, federally and provincially. Well-being frameworks and indicators are emerging around the world and recently in Canada to incorporate quality of life measurements into government decision-making. Several provinces have published comprehensive reports on child and youth health and well-being, such as British Columbia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia.



Indigenous, Métis and Inuit Context

Ongoing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities is fundamentally important to consider in efforts to advance child health and well-being outcomes and reduce inequities. Key policy considerations include the ongoing implementation in Canada of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, OCAP® principles and First Nations data sovereignty, as well as recognizing there are distinct cultural perspectives on concepts of well-being among Indigenous communities and First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

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Considerations for Government (based on research findings - see pages 3-4)

1. Make children a policy priority and co-design a shared vision for child health and wellbeing in Alberta



Why?

A shared vision can help **prioritize** children in policies, align cross-sectoral efforts and ensure principles of good governance and sound public policy-making.

Examples

- [Ireland Policy Framework for Children and Young People](#)
- [New Zealand's Child and Youth Well-being Strategy](#)
- [Scotland's Getting it Right for Every Child](#)

How?

The vision should include:

1. **'The why'**: Improving outcomes, recognizing determinants of health etc.
2. **'The what'**: Policy priorities, such as early development, mental health of children and youth, etc..
3. **'The how'**: Principles for development and implementation, including participation, collaboration, co-design, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, sustainability
4. **'The who'**: Relevant stakeholder involvement in all stages of the process

2. Create cross-sectoral child health & well-being structure to improve collaboration, efficiency and collective accountability



Why?

Having an established structure with all relevant stakeholders involved, can help with **effective implementation of policies and initiatives** and **improve collective accountability**.

It enables **collaboration and alignment** across sectors (horizontally) and involving all parts of society (vertically). This is necessary to address all determinants of health in applying an **upstream approach** to improving child health and well-being.

Examples

- [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Children, UK](#)
- [Ireland National Advisory Council for Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures](#)
- [National Child Protection Leadership Group, Scotland](#)



3. Improve measurement, data collection and ensure consistent monitoring of child health & well-being



Why?

Population level outcome and system performance data **help to identify changes, gaps and policy levers**. Policy decisions can then be taken based on evidence for successful and impactful programming.

How?

Existing **measurements, data bases, indicators and surveys** across sectors and jurisdictions need to be identified and synthesized into a **dashboard or platform** to ensure **consistent monitoring** of child/youth health and well-being outcomes and system performance

Example

[OECD Measuring What Matters for Child Well-being and Policies](#)

4. Focus on health equity and prioritize marginalized groups



Why?

According to the National Portrait on Key Health Inequities report, **health inequalities are persistent** and, in some cases, growing in Canada. Significant health inequalities exist among Indigenous peoples, sexual and racial minorities, immigrants, and people living with functional limitations and for many indicators, there is a gradient of inequalities along the socioeconomic spectrum.

How?

Identify marginalized groups and equity deserving child and youth who historically experience health disparities that can be prioritized in efforts to monitor and improve health and well-being outcomes. A parallel path led by Indigenous researchers, Elders and Knowledge Keepers that focuses on Indigenous children and youth should be considered.

Example

[Key Health Inequalities in Canada - A National Portrait](#)

Findings: Many Policies, Initiatives & Structures on Child Well-being Without Clear Alignment

Type	Selected Policies and Initiatives	Coverage		Ministries															
		Sectoral	Cross-sectoral	Children's Services	Health	Education	Community/Social	Mental Health	Justice	Advanced Ed	Indigenous Rel.	Public Safety	Culture	Municipal Affairs	Service Alberta	Transportation	Environment		
Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks	Youth Justice Act (2000) and Regulations	X																	
	Health Information Act (2000) and Regulations	X			R														
	Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (2000) and Regulations		X	R	R	R													
	Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) Act (2000) and Regulations	X				R													
	Persons with Developmental Disabilities Services Act (2000) and Regulations	X				R													
	Family Law Act (2003) and Regulations	X							R										
	Alberta Human Rights Act (2003)	X							R										
	Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) Act (2003) and Regulations		X		R	R													
	Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (2005) and Regulations	X						R											
	Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act (2000) and Regulations	X			R														
	Drug-endangered Children Act (2006) and Regulations	X			R														
	Early Learning and Child Care Act (2007) and Regulations	X			R														
	Child and Youth Advocate Act (2011)	X			R														
	Education Act (2012) and Regulations	X					R												
	Children First Act (2013) and Disclosure of Information Regulation	X			R														
Early Childhood Services Regulations (2022)	X					R													
Strategy and Accountability Instruments	Alberta Child Health Surveillance Report (2005)	X			I	R	I	I	I										
	FASD Cross-ministry Committee Initiative (2013)		X	R	R	I	I		I	I	I								
	FCSS Measures Bank & Outcomes Model (2014)	X					R											I	
	Primary Health Care Strategy (2014)	X			R														
	AHS Healthy Children & Families Strategic Plan (2014)	X			R														
	Every Student Counts - Keeping Kids in School (2014)	X					R												
	Valuing Mental Health Review and Report (2015)		X	I	R	I	I		I		I								
	Working Together to Support Mental Health in Schools (2017)		X	I	I	R			I										
	A Stronger, Safer Tomorrow: Action Plan on Child Intervention (2018)	X			R														
	Well-being and Resiliency Framework (2019)	X			R														
	Suicide Prevention Action Plan, Building Strength, Inspiring Hope (2019)		X	R	R	I	I		I	I	I								
	Strategic Clinical Network Transformational Roadmaps (2018-2022)																		
	Child and Youth Well-being Review (2021)	X			R														
	Child and Youth Well-being Action Plan (2022)		X	R	I	I	I	I								I		I	
	Toward an Alberta Model of Wellness (2022)		X	I	R		I	R	I						I				
	FCSS Accountability Framework (2022)	X					R												I
	Cross-Ministry Protocol Supporting Children/Youth/Parents w/Disabilities (2019)		X	R	I	I	R												
	Modernizing Alberta's Primary Health Care System (MAPS) (2022)	X			R														
	K-12 Education Curriculum	X					R												
	Ministerial Business Plans & Mandate Letters	X			R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R
Structures, Networks and Services	AHS Strategic Clinical Networks (SCNs)	X			R														
	Family Resource Networks (FRNs)	X			R														
	Family and Community Support Services Association (FCSSAA)		X				R												
	Office of the Child and Youth Advocate (OCYA)	X			R														
	Primary Care Networks (PCN)	X			R														
	Alberta Schools and Authorities	X					R												
	Early Childhood Services	X					R												
	Comprehensive School Health		X		R	R													
	Social-emotional Learning	X					R												
	Youth Integrated Mental Health Hubs		X	I		I	I	R											
	Mental Health Capacity Building in Schools Initiative		X		R	R													
	School Attendance Board	X					R												
	Child and Youth Health Services Initiative		X		R	I			I	I									
	Personalized Community Care		X	R	R														
	Alberta 211		X		R				I	I									
	Advancing Futures		X	R											I				
	Student Aid	X													R				
	Child and Youth Support Program	X			R														
	Alberta Child and Family Benefit (ACFB)	X			R														
	Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD)	X						R											
Alberta Child Health Benefit (ACHB)	X					R													
Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan (AHCIP)	X					R													

Figure - Overview of key Alberta legislation and government publications, structures and services
 Legend: R = Responsible or lead ministry; I = Involved or supporting ministry

So What in Terms of Policies?

We see a range of different legislative and regulatory frameworks, strategy and accountability instruments as well as existing structures and service models within and across the different sectors. Most have one or two **responsible institutions but require cooperation with various sectors** to fulfil their purpose. What seems to be **lacking, is an overarching framework, vision, strategy or charter on child health and well-being**, which ensures that all policies and initiatives align to agreed higher level results of child health and well-being outcomes and system performance.

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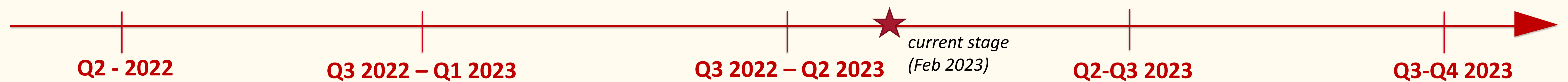


Our Project

Measure What Matters - Identifying Key Indicators to Align Policy and Service Delivery with Child Health and Well-being in Alberta, with a focus on marginalized population groups

Project Steps:

<p>1. Environmental Project Scan Needs assessment; understanding context and approaches</p>	<p>2. Alberta Environmental Scan Grey literature data on child health and well-being measures, stakeholders and policies</p>	<p>3. Rapid Literature Scoping Review Scoping of peer-reviewed and grey literature in all OECD countries since 2013; data extraction of domains and indicators used to measure child health and well-being globally</p>	<p>4. Stakeholder Dialogue and consensus process with Focus Group Discussions and a Delphi Process, Indicator selection and prioritization</p>	<p>5. Policy mapping and co-development of recommendations Analysis of findings, gaps and opportunities; co-development of recommendations</p>
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Project Partners:

- Antyx Community Arts, United Way
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Calgary Board of Education
- Calgary Catholic School District
- Calgary Centre for Child & Adolescent Mental Health
- Calgary Family Therapy Centre
- Calgary Reads
- Carya (Formerly Calgary Family Services)
- CASA Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Centre
- Children First Canada
- Discovery House
- Ever Active Schools
- Hull Services
- Kids Brain Health Network
- Luna Child and Youth Advocacy Centre
- Palliser School Division
- PolicyWise
- Trellis
- Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society
- Starlings Community
- UNICEF Canada
- Wood's Homes

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In keeping up to date with this and related projects, follow us on Twitter at @UofCr4kids and @jdzwicker or find us at <https://research4kids.ucalgary.ca/> and www.dipo.ca