

Beyond Band-aids: Delivering Healthcare Fit for Kids

Key Messages | May 2024

1. Top-line messages

- Canada is facing a **crisis in child and youth physical and mental health**. Bandaid solutions will not measurably improve child healthcare systems, or children's health outcomes.
- Children's Healthcare Canada calls on the federal government to take a **leadership role** in resolving this crisis by declaring **children's health and well-being a national priority**.
- We are also calling on the federal government to launch a **National Children's Strategy, to create a Chief Children's Health Officer** and establish **dedicated funding envelopes** for provincial and territorial governments to improve child health and well-being outcomes across the country.

Context:

- Children's healthcare systems have been underfunded for decades, leading to lengthy delays in accessing essential care, and worsening health outcomes.
- Delays come with significant costs to healthcare systems and families, and human costs to children and youth waiting for care.
- Children are not small adults. They depend on health systems purposefully designed and funded to meet their growing needs. Children's physical and mental healthcare services are delivered at home, in schools, in communities, and in hospitals. To optimize health outcomes, services must be connected across all care settings.
- Right-sized children's healthcare systems are accessible, equitable, evidence-informed, connected and designed to meet the needs of kids and families.

Right-Sizing Work Process:

- Over 18 months, Children's Healthcare Canada sought to better define the challenges children, youth and families have in accessing care, determine the human and financial costs associated with long delays in access to essential services, and co-create recommendations for right-sized health systems that serve children and youth.
- This work included an economic impact assessment series, commissioned by the Conference Board of Canada, as well as virtual and in person consultations engaging with over 600 child health champions (health system leaders, family partners, youth, researchers, educators, policy, and data experts, etc.).
- The Beyond Band-aids report outlines 19 consensus-based recommendations for collective action to right-size health systems serving children and to measurably improve their health outcomes.



Calls to Action:

- Children deserve timely access to essential healthcare services. Delays in access come with a measurable financial and human cost.
- Children's health systems require appropriate, dedicated, and protected funding across the continuum of care, including child health research.
- Children need to be an intentional focus of a national health data strategy to enhance healthcare service delivery, strengthen policies and programs, and target investments. Otherwise, nothing changes.
- More highly specialized healthcare providers are needed to meet the needs of children. The workforce that cares for children and youth needs to be an intentional focus of national health workforce planning initiatives.

2. Report Recommendations Details

3 Building Blocks for Health Systems Transformation:

- Dedicated funding envelopes for children's health services, across the continuum of care, including child health research.
- Publicly accessible child health data, collected through national health data strategies.
- A robust, sustainable, and highly specialized pediatric workforce.

Federal Government:

- Create and implement a pan-Canadian children's strategy with targets and timelines to improve children's health outcomes.
- Establish an office for a Chief Children's Health Officer.
- Create a dedicated and earmarked funding envelope to ensure a robust maternal, child, and youth health research agenda.

Provincial & Territorial Government:

- Leverage Canada Health Transfer funding to address the ongoing crisis and build capacity in systems across the continuum of care.
- Collaborate with the federal government to support developing and implementing a National Child Strategy, complete with targets and timelines to achieve measurable improvements in children's health and wellbeing.
- Establish virtual care guidelines, practices, and compensation for faster access to specialized care.
- Facilitate timely access to universal screening, early identification, and intervention without delay to address healthcare needs, particularly for mental health and developmental needs.
- Identify a designated primary care provider for every child before birth.



- Create cross-ministerial commitments to recognize families as an essential part of the children's healthcare workforce, supported by flexible financial resources and practical support.

Child Healthcare Sector:

- Design healthcare systems holistically, spanning physical, social, and mental health needs.
- Build purposeful partnerships that enable integrated care pathways for kids and families with medical complexity, disabilities, chronic conditions, or neurodiversity.
- Expand localized capacity and innovative models for children's healthcare in rural, remote, and Northern communities.
- Work toward an "ecosystem of care" for shared resources, centralized referrals, child health research, knowledge mobilization, and implementation for timely access to quality healthcare.
- Expand guidelines and education that drive child-centred, culturally inclusive healthcare practices, across the continuum of care, in all healthcare settings.
- Integrate electronic medical records and health information systems to meet the specific needs of the children's health workforce, including parents and caregivers.
- Develop technology-enabled navigation for timely, integrated access to children's healthcare and social services.
- Design a tailored transitions process to adult care that matches the needs of each child and youth.

Child Health Advocates:

- Elevate child health and healthcare priorities to ensure that the Canadian public, media partners, policymakers, and others understand the critical challenges facing children, youth, and their families in Canada and the tangible solutions available to improve outcomes.
- Engage the philanthropic community to improve children's healthcare services across the continuum of care.

