



Children First Legislation

Enhancing Supports and Protection for Alberta Children

Government, stakeholders and service delivery partners have identified opportunities to enhance legislation, tools, processes and policies to improve the security, education, health, safety and well-being of children and youth in Alberta.

The Children First Act was brought before the Legislative Assembly on May 7 and is currently being debated in the house. [Read the news release](#). [View the debate](#) or [read about it in Hansard](#).

The bill updates and amends legislation and enhances the tools, process and policies that impact how government and service providers deliver programs and services for children and youth. It also aligns with and supports the work of other initiatives including: the [Social Policy Framework](#), Early Childhood Development Strategy, [Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) and the [Information Sharing Strategy](#).

One of the key amendments involves establishing a Family Violence Death Review Committee. Children who are exposed to violence in the home or the loss of parent due to family violence can be profoundly affected. Preventing and reducing family violence is a vital part of protecting children and giving them the best possible start in life. [Read the news release](#). See below for additional information about the proposed committee.

[Overview of the Children First Act](#)

Key themes of the proposed legislation:

- + Develop a Children’s Charter to establish government-wide principles, priorities, roles and responsibilities as they pertain to Alberta children.**
- + Enhance information sharing to allow for the sharing of a child’s personal and health information for the purposes of planning and providing services.**
- + Formally establish the Child and Youth Data Laboratory in legislation and provide it with the information sharing provisions required to enhance its analysis and advice.**
- + Amend the Protection Against Family Violence Act to formally establish a Family Violence Death Review Committee.**
- + Permit the Victims of Crime funds to support groups that help child victims of crime through the use of counseling, mental health services and**

other tools that support children to overcome the impacts of trauma.

- + Change the Maintenance Enforcement Act and the Family Law Act to support greater information sharing and improve client services.**
- + Amend the Protection Against Family Violence Act to help continue to protect parents and their children from family violence by allowing protection orders from other provinces to be recognized in Alberta.**
- + Revamp the offence provisions within the Drug Endangered Children Act, Protection of Sexually Exploited Children Act, and the Child Youth and Family Enhancement Act.**
- + Enhance the mandate of the Child and Youth Advocate to allow investigations into the serious injury or death of young adults and to participate in appeal panels.**
- + Enhance relationships between child intervention workers and families by placing team-based decision making with the people who work most closely with the child and family.**
- + Increase access to justice by allowing children under 12 to appeal court orders made under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, and allowing parents and guardians to apply for a review of a permanent guardianship order.**
- + Extend the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act through 2018.**

Who was consulted in developing the Children First Act?

Over the last several years, stakeholders have identified a number of areas where government and service providers could work better together, as well as some of the systemic issues that create delays or roadblocks that impact their ability to assist children.

In addition, a cross-section of stakeholders were invited to two roundtable sessions on February 5 and 6 to discuss the legislative, policy and program challenges that impact their ability to serve Alberta children. The following groups were represented:

- Family violence prevention and intervention
- Child and youth support services
- Police
- School boards, educators
- Mental health
- Sexual assault

- Non-profit/Voluntary Sector
- Alberta Health Services
- Information sharing, protection of privacy

A variety of themes were discussed at these roundtables varying from the very high-level to the very specific. Topics raised included:

- Challenges with information sharing, protection of privacy
- Early intervention, early childhood development
- Funding and Processes
- Sexual violence
- Relationships between government, communities and service providers
- System design and navigation
- Mental Health
- Outcomes measurement and demonstrating impacts

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