

Governance and Policy priorities

In Canada, family support services are provided at a sub-national level. At the federal level, responsibility for supporting the development of such services is divided between various departments such as the Employment and Social Development Canada and Health Canada. Provinces and territories have their respective departments, typically under social services, family, education and health ministries. Coordination mechanisms for family support services include federal, provincial and territorial ministers and inter-governmental working groups/committees who meet on a regular basis.

Recent reforms have been made in early learning and childcare (ELCC) within Canada's provinces and territories whom are responsible for service delivery. In 2017, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for Early Learning and Child Care agreed on a Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework. In addition, the ELCC framework co-developed with Indigenous peoples a curriculum specializing in the needs of Indigenous populations. The framework supported by the Government of Canada was announced to have a CAD 7.5 billion (USD 5,9) budget over 11 years. The framework targets the most vulnerable families including lower-income families, Indigenous families, lone-parent families, families in underserved communities, those working non-standard hours, and/or families with children with varying abilities.

Families are supported through various measures (Box 1) including through the National Housing Strategy (NHS) launched in 2017. The strategy is a 10-year, \$55-billion+ plan to address housing issues in Canada. The NHS prioritizes vulnerable population groups, including: women and children fleeing domestic violence, seniors, young adults, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, people dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans, LGBTQ2+, racialized groups, recent immigrants and people experiencing homelessness. It sets ambitious targets to create 125,000 new housing units; reduce chronic homelessness by 50%; reduce or eliminate

housing need for 530,000 households; repair or renew 300,000 housing units; and, protect 385,000 community housing units.



Box 1. Policies supporting families

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is a federal financial support introduced in 2016 which provides an income-tested, tax-free monthly payment to eligible families to help them with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. Nearly CAD 24 billion (USD 18,7 billion) of CCB are distributed to almost 3.7 million families and about 6.5 million children each year. Close to 65% of families receiving the maximum CCB amounts are single-parent families, more than 90% of which are led by single mothers. Based on the Canadian Income Survey data released in February 2019, between 2015 and 2017, the number of children living in poverty was reduced by 278,000. In 2015, nearly 1.2 million Canadian children younger than 18 (17.0%) lived in a low-income household (StatCan, 2017). The government is currently looking to expand outreach efforts to Indigenous communities, and to conduct pilot outreach activities for urban Indigenous communities in order to increase impact of CCB.

The Child Disability Benefit (CDB), supplementary to the CCB, also provides direct assistance for families caring for a child under the age of 18 who is eligible for the Disability Tax Credit.

Programmes, characteristics and use

At the federal level, the [Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada](#) (IRCC) supports settlement service provider organizations to deliver services such as [HIPPI](#) programming, which helps mothers who are at risk of isolation increase connections to settlement services, strengthen parent and child bonding, as well as improve school readiness for children ages 3-5. Various support services are available to newcomer families to ensure that programming is accessible such as transportation and childcare services (separate from ELCC) for those accessing settlement programming, such as language or employment classes.

Box 2. Examples of family support service programmes

[Families Canada](#) is the national association of [family support centres](#) across the country. Members are community-based organizations who work with children, families and caregivers to enhance strengths, to build capacities and to promote healthy development. Family support centres deliver a range of services that focus on building supportive relationships, facilitating growth, respecting diversity and furthering community development. Each Center is run independently however their services may offer various services depending on their capacities and funding such as family resource programs, family resource centres, military family resource centres, community centres, community health centres, aboriginal friendship centres, early years centres, parent-child centres, family service societies, family places, school boards, toy libraries, and more.

[Family Services Ottawa](#) provide a wide range of supports to families including counselling services, mental health support, programmes for parents, supervised access and alternative dispute resolution programmes.

[CUPS](#) in Calgary, Alberta provides evidence-based programmes for families facing challenges related to poverty and trauma. Programmes focus on health services, developmental resources, economic supports and social supports.

IRCC also provides a Community Connections stream which involves settlement support in public spaces. This includes the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) initiative, which assists newcomer elementary and secondary students and their families. SWIS workers act as cultural liaisons and system navigators between the school and newcomer families. SWIS is offered in all IRCC regions in approximately 3,000 locations across the country. Additionally targeted settlement services that can be accessed by newcomer and refugee families include mentoring, information and orientation on rights and responsibilities, women's only employment and language supports, LGBTQ2 supports, and family and gender-based violence prevention support.

The Food Policy for Canada establishes a vision that all people in Canada are able to access a sufficient

amount of safe, nutritious, and culturally diverse food. A CAD 134.4 million (USD 104,922,048) investment was made by the government of Canada to support food security for all families.

On the municipal and provincial level family supports are targeted to the needs of families living in those areas (Box 2). For example, [Indigenous Friendship Centres](#) often have Aboriginal family support programmes and community-based programmes which are offered off reserve and are created in collaboration with local Indigenous communities. Families needs are supported through culturally appropriate specialised services such as children's wellness programs, Indigenous Courtworker programs to help with family and child welfare matters, Indigenous EarlyOn programming, counselling for Aboriginal youth etc.

Monitoring and knowledge sharing

The knowledge and information regarding family support services are shared among provinces and territories on both a federal and cross-provincial level. For example, information on federally funded immigration-related family and support services are shared through federal engagement with provincial and territorial governments and with the broader settlement sector including NGO's. There are various established mechanisms of collaboration, which includes the [National Settlement and Integration Council](#) (a platform for engagement with the broader network of settlement and non-settlement service providers), as well as other mechanisms for horizontal collaboration and information sharing across federal departments and various international mechanisms such as the International Organization on Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada (FCFA), and the Canadian Council on Refugees.

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