

Child Poverty and Health: A Response from the Vancouver Coastal Region Early Years Framework Partners

The Vancouver Coastal Region Early Years Framework describes a common vision, mission, principles, and roles for the public and community based organizations that provide early years services in the Vancouver Coastal Region. The Framework was developed in the spirit that improving the well being and development of children across the Vancouver Coastal region is an obligation for all partners. On March 27, 2009 three regional partners (Vancouver Coastal Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development and United Way of the Lower Mainland) signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to implement the Framework. This commitment recognizes the Framework as a forum for the enhancement of partnerships, the expansion of collaborative practice opportunities and the development of an integrated service delivery approach.

As regional partners, we are concerned about all issues affecting the health and development of children in the Vancouver Coastal region. Research tells us that poverty has a profound impact on the well being of children and families and can hinder the development of children. Within our country, province and region, a significant number of children and families continue to live in poverty. In November 2009, the House of Commons passed a resolution to develop an immediate plan to eliminate poverty in Canada for all. Both governments and partners can (and do) make a significant difference in reducing poverty.

As partners of this Framework, we recognize that there are different approaches to addressing this important issue and view the Framework as an opportunity for dialogue towards solutions:

- Developed by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the *Strong, Safe and Supported* report outlines the provincial government's commitment to BC's children and youth. *Strong, Safe, and Supported* emphasizes that when first priority needs that are necessary for life and survival, such as shelter, clothing, food, safety and health are not met, vulnerability is created and the healthy development and well being of children is affected. A number of jurisdictions have established plans or initiatives to specifically address the issue of child poverty and they reflect a cross-government approach and targeted investments just like we are taking in British Columbia. While work remains, we are encouraged by trends showing the rate of child poverty has decreased by 13 per cent since 2001, after increasing by 22 per cent in the decade previous.
- Dr. Patty Daly, Chief Medical Health Officer for Vancouver Coastal Health is concerned about child poverty. "As a Health partner we are concerned about the short and long term health implications of children who are living in poverty. Our health care system sees the impact that poverty has on children and families and the need to reduce the number of families living in poverty. Public health regularly implements targets and timelines for health goals."
- Michael McKnight, President and CEO of the United Way of the Lower Mainland offers the following, "At the United Way of the Lower Mainland, everyday we see evidence of why BC needs a poverty reduction plan. Too many people in our community are vulnerable. We also know that poverty profoundly affects young children and their school readiness."

As regional partners, we are committed to the health and well being of all children and families in the region. We have an obligation to identify and advocate for healthy public policies that can increase the health and well being of all of our children and families. We are confident that much can be learned from other jurisdictions who have successfully addressed child poverty. As a successful partnership, providing leadership in the Vancouver Coastal region, we are committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to reduce the poverty rate for children and families.

Early Years Framework

Vancouver Coastal Region



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