



## Children's Mental Health Initiative

### Background

June 2004

The Children's Mental Health Initiative is one of several coordinated activities implemented as part of the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI). Working collaboratively, the Alberta Mental Health Board, government ministries and their agencies, regional health authorities, and contracted service providers plan, coordinate and/or deliver mental health services to children, youth and their families.

### Children's Mental Health Initiatives

Initiatives focus on building capacity in the area of Children's Mental Health and reducing risk of mental health problems and providing support and treatment for children, youth and their families.

### The Framework and the Provincial Mental Health Plan

To enhance coordination and access to services a provincial integrated policy framework for a comprehensive system of mental health services for children and youth was developed. *The Policy Framework: Mental Health for Alberta's Children and Youth* was an essential first step in the development of an integrated approach to mental health for Alberta's children and youth and their families.

With the transition of mental health services to regional health authorities in 2003, key relationships were developed at the regional level to plan services for children and youth. Alberta's new Provincial Mental Health Plan was released on May 19, 2004. This comprehensive plan covers all aspects of mental health services, including services to children and youth. The plan was developed through extensive consultation with the public, various advocates and organizations, as well as with those who work directly in the field of mental health. The plan has been endorsed by all nine regional health authorities and by key stakeholders in mental health. The plan incorporates the vision, principles and strategic directions of *The Policy Framework: Mental Health for Alberta's Children and Youth*. By Spring 2005, the regional health authorities will develop regional plans with their stakeholders to address the mental health needs of children, youth and their families within the broader plan for mental health services in the region. The Alberta Mental Health Board will initiate and facilitate the development of an approach for advancing mental health within the context of the Provincial Mental Health Plan. Work is also underway on a number of initiatives including the development of new funding models.

## Strategic Directions

Mental Health for Alberta's children, youth and their families will be achieved through three strategic directions:

- Building capacity to foster mental health
- Reducing risks to optimal mental health
- Providing support and treatment for children, youth and their families

The Provincial Mental Health Plan indicates that one of the key inter-ministerial priorities where action should be taken is to follow through on initiatives related to children's mental health. The Plan also recommends that the organizational framework and management infrastructure of the ACYI be used to advance initiatives that have implications for children and youth mental health services. The following specific areas have been identified as priority strategies and actions to be taken with children and youth:

- Youth in Transition - build bridges and supports to assist youth with mental health problems to transition from adolescent to adult programs and services.
- Services for children in care - ensure that regional health authorities, relevant ministries and related authorities, proactively and collaboratively address the needs of children in care.
- Children and youth early intervention, prevention and education - increase recognition, awareness and understanding of the needs of children and youth with mental illness, and the benefits of effective prevention, early intervention and treatment programs.
- Services for expectant women and new mothers - work cooperatively with women's and children's health services in each region to ensure that prenatal education, screening and pre- and postnatal counseling are provided to all expectant mothers.

## Outcomes

The Children's Mental Health Initiative supports the following ACYI outcomes:

- Children and youth practice healthy behaviors
- Youth are successful in the transition to adulthood
- Aboriginal children and youth receive supports that are responsive to their cultural needs.

## Initiative Partners

Alberta Health and Wellness  
Alberta Mental Health Board  
AADAC  
Alberta Human Resources and Employment  
Alberta Children's Services

Alberta Learning  
Alberta Community Development  
Alberta Solicitor General  
Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

For more information contact: <http://www.amhb.ab.ca>