

Child and Youth Health: Our Challenge

La santé de nos enfants et de nos jeunes : le vrai défi



Life
Vie



Growth
Croissance



Health
Santé

Canada's Child and Youth Health Charter / Charte canadienne de la santé des enfants et des jeunes

29 July / juillet 2007

ASSOCIATION
MÉDICALE
CANADIENNE



CANADIAN
MEDICAL
ASSOCIATION

Canadian
Paediatric
Society



Société
canadienne
de pédiatrie



The College of
Family Physicians
of Canada

Le Collège des
médecins de famille
du Canada

OVERVIEW

CHILD HEALTH IN CANADA

THEIR CHARTER — OUR CHALLENGE

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way it treats its children.”
Nelson Mandela

“One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade.”
Chinese Proverb

Children have always been a priority of the doctors of Canada — the Children’s Health Initiative of the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the College of Family Physicians of Canada is evidence of that. We three organizations have joined together to launch the Children’s Health Initiative as part of our Doctors for Healthy Kids partnership.

In September 2004, Canada’s first ministers committed to “improving the health status of Canadians through a collaborative process,” which led to an agreement on health goals for Canada. The first of them is *“Our children reach their full potential, growing up happy, healthy, confident and secure.”* It is a laudable ideal, but we owe it to our children to get beyond high-level, minimalist statements to tangible health goals and targets.

From the outset of the partnership, we were acutely aware that only a broad societal coalition could achieve the overarching goal of excellence in children’s health in Canada. Making children a national priority requires a coalition of child-health champions, including governments, parents, health providers, business, schools, teachers and communities.

To start that process, we created Canada’s Child Health Charter. Then, because a charter alone will not deliver on the vision of the children of Canada being among the healthiest in the world, Canada’s Child Health Challenge was developed. Together, we believe they will help to build a coalition of child-health champions because they give the people who can make a difference in children’s health something to rally around.

The credibility and success of the charter and the challenge require broad, inclusive consultation and a commitment to child health from society at large. The Child Health Summit is about consultation and commitment.

This document contains the Canada’s Child Health Charter, Canada’s Child Health Challenge and Canada’s Child Health Declaration. They are the focus of the summit — the components of our commitment and promise to take action for the children of Canada.

Canada's Child Health Charter

In 2005, Canada's federal, provincial and territorial governments created pan-Canadian health goals. The first of them is "Canada is a country where: Our children reach their full potential, growing up happy, healthy, confident and secure."

To reach their potential, children need to grow up in a place where they can thrive — spiritually, emotionally, mentally, physically and intellectually — and get high-quality health care when they need it. That place must have three fundamental elements: a safe and secure environment; good health and development; and a full range of health resources available to all. Children of special populations in Canada, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, must be offered equal opportunities as other Canadian children through culturally relevant resources.

1. A place with a safe and secure environment includes:

- a) Clean water, air and soil;
- b) Protection from injury, exploitation and discrimination; and
- c) Healthy family, homes and communities.

2. A place where a child can have good health and development offers:

- a) Prenatal and maternal care for the best possible health at birth;
- b) Nutrition for proper growth, development and long-term health;
- c) Early learning opportunities and high-quality care, at home and in the community;
- d) Opportunities and encouragement for physical activity;
- e) High-quality primary and secondary education;
- f) Affordable and available post-secondary education; and
- g) A commitment to social well-being and mental health.

3. A full range of health resources available to all means:

- a) Basic health care including immunization, drugs and dental health;
- b) Mental health care and early help programs for children and youth;
- c) Access to specialty diagnostic and health services;
- d) Measurement and tracking the health of children and youth;
- e) Research that focuses on the needs of children and youth; and
- f) Uninterrupted care as youth move to adult health services and between acute, chronic and community care.

NOTES

1. The principles of this charter apply to all children in Canada regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, language, gender, physical ability, mental ability, cultural history, or life experience.
2. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children sets out the wider rights of all children and young people.
3. Principles enshrined in all the goal statements include:
 - a. **Universality:** The charter applies equally to all children residing in Canada and covers all children from 0-18 years of age, including adolescents and youth.
 - b. **Without financial burden:** All children in Canada should have access to required health care, health services and drugs regardless of ability to pay.
 - c. **Barrier-free access:** All children, regardless of ability or circumstance should have appropriate access to optimal health care and health services.
 - d. **Measurement and monitoring:** Appropriate resources will be available for adequate on-going collection of data on issues that affect children's health and development.
 - e. **Safe and secure communities:** Communities in Canada must create an environment for children to grow that is safe and secure.
4. The purpose of this charter is to facilitate development of specific goals, objectives, actions and advocacy that will measurably improve children's health throughout Canada.
5. Success will be identified as simple, measurable, achievable, and timely goals and objectives for each of the 17 statements in this charter.
6. The initial draft of this charter has been developed by Canada's physicians focusing on what they can best do to improve children's health; however, the support and participation of all individuals and groups interested in children's health is encouraged and desired.
7. Participation by children and parents in developing the charter will be facilitated.
8. The primary audience for actions and advocacy arising from this charter will be governments, agencies or individuals who, by virtue of legislation, regulation or policy have the ability to effect change for children.
9. This charter is not a legal document; it represents a commitment by champions of child health in Canada to the health and well-being of all children in Canada.