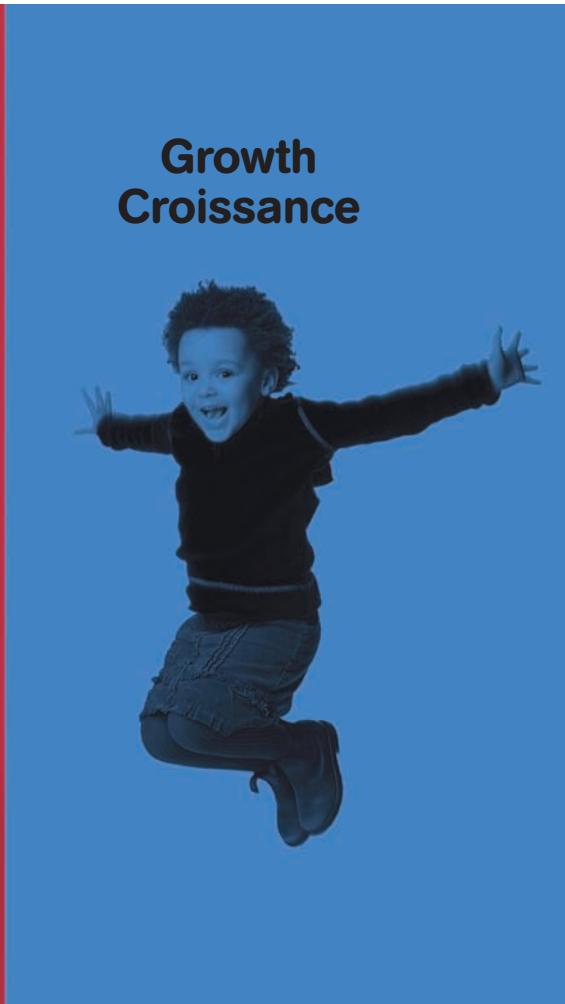


Child and Youth Health: Our Challenge

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



Canada's Child and Youth Health Charter

9 October 2007

OVERVIEW
CHILD AND YOUTH 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 and youth have always been a priority for the doctors of Canada — the Child and Youth 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 joined together in November 2006 to launch the Child and Youth Health Initiative.

In September 2004, Canada’s first ministers committed to “improving the health status of Canadians through a collaborative process.” This 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.*” At the international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the wider rights of all children and young people, including the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. We now owe it to our children and youth to develop 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 child and youth health in Canada. Making the health of children and youth a national priority requires a coalition of child and youth health champions, including governments, parents, health providers, businesses, schools, teachers and communities.

To start that process, we created *Canada’s Child and Youth Health Charter*. An action framework was then developed called *Canada’s Child and Youth Health Challenge* because a charter alone will not deliver on the vision of the children and youth of Canada being among the healthiest in the world. Together, we believe they will help to build a coalition of child and youth health champions because they give the people who can make a difference in children and youth health a rallying point.

The credibility and success of the Charter and the Challenge require broad, inclusive consultation and a commitment to child and youth health from society at large. The Child and Youth Health Summit, held April 25-26, 2007, was about consultation and commitment to making a difference to the health and well-being of children and youth.

This document contains *Canada’s Child and Youth Health Charter*, which was one of the focuses of the summit. *Canada’s Child and Youth Health Challenge* and *Canada’s Child and Youth Health Declaration*, are the other components of our commitment and promise to take action for the children of Canada. These documents can be found at www.ourchildren.ca.

Canada's Child and Youth 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 and youth 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 and youth of distinct populations in Canada, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis, must be offered equal opportunities as other Canadian children and youth through culturally relevant resources.

Canada must become:

- 1. A place with a safe and secure environment:**
 - a) Clean water, air and soil;
 - b) Protection from injury, exploitation and discrimination; and
 - c) Healthy family, homes and communities.

- 2. A place where children and youth can have good health and development:**
 - 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 place where a full range of health resources is available:**
 - a) Basic health care including immunization, drugs and dental health;
 - b) Mental health care and early help programs for children and youth;
 - c) Timely 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, as well as between jurisdictions.

NOTES

1. The principles of this charter apply to all children and youth in Canada regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, language, gender, physical ability, mental ability, cultural history, or life experience.
2. Principles enshrined in all the goal statements include:
 - a. **Universality:** The charter applies equally to all children and youth residing in Canada and covers all children and youth from 0-18 years of age.
 - b. **Without financial burden:** All children and youth in Canada should have access to required health care, health services and drugs regardless of ability to pay.
 - c. **Barrier-free access:** All children and youth, 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 ongoing collection of data on issues that affect child and youth health and development.
 - e. **Safe and secure communities:** Communities in Canada must create an environment for children and youth to grow that is safe and secure.
3. The purpose of this charter is to facilitate development of specific goals, objectives, actions and advocacy that will measurably improve child and youth health throughout Canada.
4. Success will be identified as simple, measurable, achievable, and timely goals and objectives for each of the 16 statements in this charter.
5. The initial draft of this charter has been developed by Canada's physicians focusing on what they can best do to improve child and youth health; however, the support and participation of all individuals and groups interested in child and youth health is encouraged and desired.
6. 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 and youth.
7. This charter is not a legal document; it represents a commitment by champions of child and youth health in Canada to the health and well-being of all children and youth in Canada.

Charter Endorsers

The following organizations have endorsed the *Child and Youth Health Charter*, as of October 9, 2007.

Association of Canadian Academic Healthcare Organizations
Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
Breakfast for Learning
Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres
Canadian Child and Youth Health Coalition
Canadian Healthcare Association
Canadian Institute of Child Health
Canadian Medical Association
Canadian Paediatric Society
Canadian Pharmacists Association
Canadian Psychological Association
Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development
Centre for Science in the Public Interest
College of Family Physicians of Canada
Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights
Muttart Foundation
National Alliance for Children and Youth
National Anti-Poverty Organization
Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association
Paediatric Chairs of Canada
Safe Kids Canada, The National Injury Prevention Program of The Hospital for Sick Children
Silken's ActiveKids Movement and Silken and Company Productions
The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada