

Shared Priorities

Sustainable Progress

A 12-Month Action Plan for Manitoba Families

December 2019



Message from Hon. Heather Stefanson Minister of Families



As Manitoba's Minister of Families, I am focused on protecting our children, helping the most vulnerable, and supporting Manitoba families so they can lead lives of dignity and financial independence.

To accomplish these goals, it is clear that transformative changes are needed. Fundamentally, we need to transform the way that we provide services to Manitobans so that we are offering them a hand up, not a hand out.

Over the previous decade, the Department of Families fell consistently short of its stated objectives to strengthen families and support vulnerable Manitobans. The number of children in care in Manitoba doubled, resulting in the destabilization of families. The Employment and Income Assistance caseload increased by over 11,000 clients, leaving more Manitobans dependent on government benefits. The waitlist for child care doubled, and Manitoba was consistently ranked the child poverty capital of Canada.

The Department of Families has already taken action to reverse these trends, but much more needs to be done. That is why I am proud to release this action plan for Manitoba families, which will inform our transformative initiatives over the next 12 months. In this document, you will find the ten main priority areas for the Department of Families over the coming year along with the elaboration of key priority tasks across divisions.

I recognize that transforming how we deliver services to Manitobans will take more than one year. However, activities over the next year across the entire department will focus on making significant progress toward achieving the goals outlined in this action plan.

I believe strongly in the capacity of the staff in the Department of Families to innovate and transform their work while improving the ways we support funded agencies to provide Manitobans with the quality and outcome-based services that they deserve.

As Minister of Families, I am confident that this action plan will help the department protect our children, reduce dependence on government programs, and strengthen Manitoba families and communities.

Hon. Heather Stefanson
Minister of Families

Shared Priorities – Sustainable Progress

The Department of Families is guided by the vision that all individuals served by the department are to be supported in their personal development, stability and independence. Our mission is to help keep children, individuals, families, and communities safe and secure, while supporting personal development, self-reliance, well-being and social inclusion.

Over the past two years, the Manitoba government has made significant headway toward modernizing the public service. Through transformative actions in support of innovative management practices and careful reorganization, greater efficiencies are being achieved.

Although much progress has been made, we also know that the future sustainability of our programs is vitally important. As a department, we must be responsive to the needs of the Manitobans who rely on the social services and supports provided by our department. We also need to support government to achieve its priorities of financial responsibility, regulatory accountability and public transparency.

In keeping with the government's transformation strategy, the department is committed to streamlining, modernizing, and innovating within its work. Families will continue to provide the citizens we serve with high-quality programs and services, while also doing our part to support overall government sustainability efforts through careful management of our department's resources.

This document sets forth the following main priority areas this year for the Department of Families:

1. Leadership Framework

The Department of Families is committed to fostering an organizational culture that is responsive to staff ideas and innovation, and that supports leadership in the workplace.

Priority: Build leadership capacity to support transformation and working differently

Based on the leadership development and culture change experiences over the past decade at Manitoba Housing, the department has developed a framework of leadership principles that support change and transformation across our department. This framework consists of six groups of principles that guide the behaviour of the department's leaders to transition our organizational culture:

- Shaping a positive workplace environment
- Supporting leadership and authority
- Building respect and teamwork
- Creating strategic alignment
- Advancing learning and coaching
- Fostering innovation

This framework has a supporting six-week training program for leaders that has been delivered successfully twelve times across the department. The program has resonated with other departments across government and, by the end of 2019, over

300 leaders from Families and ten other departments will complete this program. We will continue to invest in developing leadership skills and capacity across our department and at all levels. We will also commit to sharing information with staff to promote better transparency and shared understanding of the transformative initiatives that are underway and those that will begin in the near future.

As a first step in this journey, key departmental activities and more significant program development initiatives are outlined below.

2. Agency Relations and Contract Management

The Administration and Finance division continues its work to support the government's transformation strategy and enhance responsible financial management.

Priority: Enhance processes to engage agencies to better align program and financial oversight

As a priority, Administration and Finance's Agency Accountability and Support Unit (AASU) will work more closely with program and service delivery staff in the department to ensure that support for funded agencies is provided through an integrated financial, program and service delivery lens. Greater coordination between financial, program and service oversight will result in a more holistic, consistent approach to building organizations' capacity.

For example, AASU staff and department program and service specialists will meet jointly with funded agencies to review agency

budgets, strategic plans and service delivery outcomes. Under this priority, more support will be provided to agencies that need department assistance to ensure that they are delivering the best possible services to Manitobans. This work will also recognize and foster agency autonomy, with a strong focus on outcomes-based funding.

Priority: Develop more robust service purchase agreement oversight

Administration and Finance will play a key role in developing more robust oversight of the department's service purchase agreements. Through a competitive process, Families has hired MNP, a leading Canadian chartered accountancy and business advisory firm. With support from department staff, MNP will conduct a review of the department's contract management practices and provide recommendations to strengthen financial management and control.

The goals of this project are to improve contract management practices, identify methods to review spending at a macro scale and identify ways to track overall spending and recognize trends. An important aspect of this project will be to provide training and change management to department staff to ensure that contract management practices are updated and modernized.

3. Community Living disABILITY Services

During the past ten years, the Community Living disABILITY Services (CLDS) caseload has grown by 46 per cent, and the program budget has increased by almost

130 per cent. The department recognizes the need to create a more fair, equitable and transparent service delivery system and funding model.

Priority: Continue implementing the building on abilities funding model

In 2015, CLDS launched a redevelopment initiative called *building on abilities* that started to move the program towards an assessment-informed approach that aligns funding with individuals' assessed support needs.

CLDS phased-in this approach by initially applying the funding guidelines to new entrants only. This gradual introduction of change minimized service disruption within the sector, and enabled the program to learn from and refine the implementation process.

Work continues to implement new funding guidelines across program streams both for existing and new participants.

Priority: Supporting funded agencies

The department will concentrate efforts to support agency capacity and sustainability. Program and financial staff will work together to better align financial and program oversight support to funded agencies.

The department is examining the role of CLDS funded service provider agencies and our Community Service Workers to more clearly define responsibilities and reduce the duplication of work. By undertaking this work, CLDS staff will have less involvement in the day-to-day

operations of service providers and be able to have an enhanced focus on protection services, regulatory accountability, and quality assurance.

Priority: Meet with sector to generate innovation

The department continues to work with our community partners and stakeholders to generate innovative approaches to policy and service delivery challenges.

CLDS is committed to working with agency service providers to develop more Supported Independent Living and Home Share services for people with lower to moderate support needs. This would reduce the program's reliance on costly shift-staffed homes and promote greater independence for participants.

Additionally, CLDS has been working toward the development and construction of specially designed "purpose-built" homes for adults with intellectual disabilities who have complex behavioural support needs.

The interior finishes of these purpose-built residences are to be built to a higher standard than typical residential construction, with each building tailored to serve four residents with challenging support needs. These homes create a sense of belonging and support residents to age in place within their communities.

CLDS will also explore how to better connect adults with intellectual disabilities with employment opportunities. It is estimated that only five per cent of this population is gainfully employed. The department is committed to working with

our agency partners and the business community to support these individuals to actively participate in the workforce.

Priority: Build a business case to advocate for federal funding for First Nations participants accessing CLDS services off reserve

One of the main referral sources for CLDS is the Child and Family Services (CFS) system. Many Indigenous youth may have come into CFS care due to a lack of available disability and other related support services for children and youth in First Nations communities.

A significant percentage of the volume growth for CLDS is related to supporting young adults who are Indigenous and aging out of the CFS system. The department will explore how to meet these needs in a sustainable way into the future.

4. Children’s disABILITY Services

Children’s disABILITY Services (CDS) continues to build on a family-centred and assessment-informed approach to providing services to families raising children with disabilities.

Ongoing changes to operations and service delivery models will enhance efficiency and quality in the program. Engaging families and stakeholders in program evaluation to identify opportunities to strengthen our services and processes commit CDS to a culture of continuous improvement.

Priority: Coordination of services with CFS Agencies

The CDS program will work to improve service coordination between CFS and CDS so that children receive the disability-related services they need. The Unified Family Support Service team, made up of staff from CDS and Winnipeg Child and Family Services, is exploring new pathways of service for families involved with both programs. This specialized, unified team supports families who have children living with disabilities who are also involved in the child welfare system. Families are provided integrated supports through a better understanding of the child and family’s needs.

Priority: Strengthening families’ natural supports

The CDS program remains committed to building and strengthening natural family resources and parent networks. Supporting family independence and resiliency enables families to have more control and influence in the CDS services they receive to assist with raising their child with a disability. This includes:

- Continuing to shift to a self-managed model for respite, whereby families independently manage their respite plan
- Building and improving web-based resources for families through a stepped approach, providing immediate information and support in a cost effective and accessible method for parents across the province

5. Employment and Income Assistance Strategy

The department is developing a strategic plan for the Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Program that aims to reduce caseload and expenditure growth by supporting clients to secure financial independence. The plan continues to build on our work towards a culture shift in social assistance: one that recognizes capacity, contribution and the right to participate in the workforce.

This plan focusses on taking a client-centric, assessment-informed approach to providing financial assistance. The plan also recognizes that the department's success in helping people gain independence relies on our ability to collaborate with different levels of government, as well as external stakeholders and service providers.

The EIA Program will focus on working with these partners to develop and deliver programming and supports for recipients of EIA. The success of this new approach will depend on the collaborative efforts of all sectors and is intended to result in less reliance on the Manitoba civil service for outcomes. The following priority areas will help us to achieve these goals:

Priority: Jobs on Market / Jobs on 9th – employment focus

Jobs on Market in Winnipeg is an employment centre dedicated to serving non-disabled adults without children who are assessed as closest to the labour market. Recognizing the success of this approach, Jobs on 9th in Brandon was

announced this spring and will begin operations in the fall of 2019.

Priority: Service needs assessments

The department continues to collaborate with Manitoba Economic Development and Training (EDT) to increase financial independence of EIA clients through improved employment outcomes.

Families and EDT are working together to engage with an external service provider to conduct service needs assessments for persons with disabilities. These assessments will help inform employment planning with these clients. EDT, in partnership with Families, has issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) for an external service provider to complete assessments for EIA clients enrolled in the Persons with Disabilities category.

The two departments will also be partnering on a project whereby a third party agency will provide intensive employment services and administer a short-term benefit. The goal of this project is to divert EIA applicants assessed as being employment and training ready and who would otherwise be enrolled on EIA.

Priority: Focused interventions

Focused interventions will help to move identified groups of EIA recipients into the labour market. Supports will be targeted to certain groups who have the potential to be active participants in the workforce. This includes newcomers, single parents with school-age children, EIA clients closest to the labour market, and persons with disabilities.

Priority: Developing a new income support program for persons with disabilities

As part of the government's recent commitments, Families will be developing a new income support program for persons with severe and prolonged disabilities. The department will be holding consultation sessions with the community to inform the development of the new disability income program.

Priority: Caseload distribution

Caseloads and services are being examined for EIA (as well as the CLDS and CDS programs) to ensure that the level of supports provided are equitable and align with assessed client needs and government priorities for supports and services. Clients with lower support needs will be assigned to staff carrying higher caseloads and program responses will emphasize self-management for the most independent clients.

Priority: Supports for Independence

Supporting clients access to other sources of income continues to be an important priority for EIA. Toward this, the Supports for Independence unit helps EIA participants navigate application processes and troubleshoot any roadblocks to accessing other financial resources.

6. Housing

Manitoba Housing continues to collaborate with community organizations, private and non-profit partners and other levels of government toward the creation of safe and affordable housing in our province.

Priority: Develop and implement a plan to transform Housing, while aligning where possible with the federal housing strategy

Key activities to advance the department's priorities this year will include Manitoba Housing's work to transition from its current role as a housing provider to emphasize its responsibilities as a funder and regulator.

A plan for Manitoba Housing is being developed with the key goal of making social housing in our province more sustainable. This includes changing the design of how housing is currently managed and delivered.

The current system of housing subsidies is unnecessarily complex. The department will work with partners to develop a more simple benefit system that better meets the needs of tenants.

Manitoba Housing will continue devolving housing management to the non-profit and municipal sectors, and upgrading and selling assets where it makes good sense. Housing will work with the non-profit and municipal sectors to ensure they have the capacity to take on a growing housing portfolio, and ensure that vulnerable people are not put at risk.

The department will leverage federal funds under the National Housing Strategy to modernize the portfolio (for example, through capital upgrades, expansion, divestments, income-mixing) and reduce reliance on government subsidies.

Manitoba Housing will continue to build capacity among providers through education/training and sector amalgamation. A particular focus will be on opportunities to build the capacity of Indigenous housing providers since Indigenous people are disproportionately represented in low-income and housing need measures.

Priority attention will also be given to supporting populations who have additional barriers to accessing the housing market (for example, youth aging out of the child welfare system, and women and children experiencing domestic violence).

7. Child and Family Services

Manitoba's Child and Family Services (CFS) system is on the cusp of foundational change. The federal government has announced that An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families will come into force on January 1, 2020.

This means that as of January 1, CFS agencies will need to implement the national standards introduced in the federal act when providing CFS services to Indigenous children.

Indigenous communities will also be able to notify the federal and provincial governments that they want to take responsibility for child welfare services under their own laws. Once a community provides notice, the federal government, the provincial government and the Indigenous community will have one year to enter into a trilateral coordination agreement that lays out how services will be transferred from provincial responsibility to Indigenous communities.

This sweeping change will take place over time and will be successful through strong partnerships at all levels – between governments, communities, service providers and especially with the input and voices of Manitobans with lived experience in the CFS system. Manitoba's CFS Transformation Plan provides many of the key principles that will guide Manitoba's approach to this process.

Priority: Manitoba's CFS Transformation Plan

The Child and Family Services Program and the four CFS Authorities have been working diligently to implement government's CFS Transformation Plan, and this work will continue. The goals of this transformation are to strengthen and preserve families in their community, reduce the number of children in care and shorten the amount of time that children spend in care. While these goals are simple to state, implementing the systemic transformation necessary to make a real difference is one of the most challenging policy problems facing our department.

Fundamental to this system-wide transformation is establishing a new legislative framework for CFS. A new act will lay out a robust continuum of services with greater emphasis on supporting children and families with the help and expertise of community members, including people who care for the family and service providers external to the CFS system. The new CFS Act will combine the CFS Act, the CFS Authorities Act and the CFS Authorities Regulation into one act that is clear, written in plain language, and implements the recommendations of Manitoba's CFS Legislative Review. It will also be harmonized with the national standards introduced in the federal CFS act.

Priority: Single Envelope Funding

The new Single Envelope Funding model is also designed to empower transformative change, by giving CFS Authorities and agencies the flexibility to begin to allocate more funding to prevention and early intervention initiatives. Through single envelope funding, the Authorities are given the responsibility for allocating agency budgets, and CFS agencies in turn have the ability to implement creative solutions to support families and to prevent the need for children to come into care or to remain in care. This new funding approach furthers the objectives of CFS devolution and enhances opportunities to shift long-standing practices that have led to the growing numbers of apprehensions in Manitoba.

A pilot of this funding approach was undertaken in 2017 and 2018, and showed immediate improvements in both the

number of children coming into care and the costs associated with those placements.

Priority: Emergency placement resources

An additional stream of systemic change includes how emergency placement resources are designed and accessed. Department staff, together with several community-based service providers and the CFS Authorities, are working on developing a community-led emergency response system that is culturally competent and more responsive to the individual needs of families and children experiencing crisis.

Priority: Tracia's Trust: Manitoba's Sexual Exploitation Strategy

Tracia's Trust: Manitoba's Sexual Exploitation Strategy remains an important priority. This strategy is a collaborative interdepartmental/community led approach comprised of multiple service initiatives and programming in the areas of prevention, intervention, legislation, research and evaluation for children, youth and adults.

In 2019, the Sexual Exploitation Unit released research entitled "Collaboration and Best Practices to End Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking in Manitoba". This report lays the groundwork for an upstream approach to inform and align government and community response. Families continue to work and collaborate with its diverse stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to address the vulnerable and complex issues of young Manitobans in the areas of mental health, addiction initiatives, youth justice recidivism and sexual exploitation.

A joint Families and Justice review is also underway to better understand and improve the intersection between these two systems and the pathways that lead children and youth from one system into the other. To inform this plan, a working group is actively exploring the successful approaches of other jurisdictions that have drastically reduced the number of youths ending up incarcerated. Improving outcomes for these children – which must include reducing CFS and justice sector involvement in their lives in favour of therapeutic supports – is a priority.

8. Early Learning and Child Care

To begin working toward transformative system change underpinned by choice for families through increased child care options, actions will be taken in fundamental areas to design and build a responsive and sustainable early learning and child care (ELCC) model. This will include:

Priority: Review of the ELCC Program Funding Model

The Manitoba government issued a Request for Proposals on June 10, 2019 targeting a final report being submitted to Manitoba in May 2020. Recommendations are expected to inform the modernization of the ELCC funding model using an outcomes-based approach that is equitable across the system and flexible to proactively address changes in child care demand.

Toward flexibility of funding, the government has committed to a new Portable Child Care Benefit to provide

monthly child care cost relief to families who need it most, for whichever child care choice they make. This benefit will help cover child care costs with a subsidy of up to \$500 per month for 3,000 lower-income families. Families will be able to use this subsidy at any child care provider.

Priority: Child Care Space Development

To begin to address the need to provide more child care options to Manitoba families, the following opportunities will be prioritized:

- introducing a private sector/for-profit capital grant to incentivise expansion or new development of for-profit child care centres
- continuing the Child Care Centre Development Tax Credit which allows corporations to create new licensed ELCC spaces to support their employees and the surrounding community and promotes private sector partnerships.

Priority: Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (bilateral agreement)

In 2017, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for ELCC signed the Multilateral ELCC Framework effective April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2028. Manitoba will receive a federal allocation of approximately \$46.8 million over the first three years to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care.

Strengthening sector capacity to improve the quality of the ELCC system is a core element throughout Manitoba's Action Plan in the agreement. Building

on initiatives aimed at increasing the overall skills and knowledge of the workforce will result in stronger services, enriched programming and adaptability of providers to deliver more inclusive and diverse services to better meet the needs of Manitoba families. Priority work in this area will include:

- rural Competency-Based Assessment program
- core professional development on attachment through the Circle of Security approach
- province-wide access to the Science of Early Child Development (SECD)
- governance training for boards of directors
- formal mentorship for home-based providers

9. Social Innovation Office

With the ongoing support of the Healthy Child Manitoba Office, the department is creating a Social Innovation Office to serve as a hub for social innovation across government. This office is responsible for initiating projects with socially responsible entities outside of government to develop creative solutions to social concerns.

Priority: Develop capacity for social investment with focus on Social Impact Bonds

Under a social impact bond model, the provincial government will partner with service providers to identify social problems to address with a social impact bond. One or more investors lend money to cover the program's costs.

Investors are attracted to social impact bonds because it aligns with their corporate social responsibility, and may improve their business profile while promoting sector development. Investors also have the potential to gain a return on investment, depending on the project scope.

As a priority, the department is committed to delivering three to five social impact bonds over the course of this year.

10. Develop the remaining three standards under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) calls for the creation of accessibility standards that set out policies and practices to identify, prevent and remove barriers.

The Manitoba government has committed to developing five standards under the AMA, two of which have already been completed for the areas of customer service and employment.

Priority: Develop the remaining three standards under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

In addition to the first two standards for customer service and employment, the remaining three standards will be developed for the areas of information and communications, built environment and transportation. The department and the Manitoba government are on track to complete consultations, receive final recommendations and enact all AMA standards by December 2020.

Working differently – a new vision for transformation

The Department of Families has aligned this year's set of priorities to support Manitoba's vision for transformation of the public service.

As we embrace the challenge to work differently, our priorities are set to ensure that the department provides the right service to our clients at the right time.

It is imperative that we keep fiscal sustainability as an important priority in all of our work. As part of this, government will better focus its workforce to provide greater oversight and support for the agencies we fund.

We need to engage with and deeply understand the clients we serve, keeping ever mindful that more needs to be done toward accessibility, inclusion, and reconciliation.

We have a rich diversity of staff who bring integrity and creativity to the workplace every day, and we want to further develop and take full advantage of these strengths. By connecting with our colleagues and teams, we can share ideas and our experience as we co-create innovative solutions—identifying what works and what does not.

We will take bold steps forward, adapt to the many changes that are before us, and reform our work to align with government priorities. We will continue to have open conversations about what our future work will look like and how our work will change.

We can and will meet all of these priorities by continuing to do what we do best—serving Manitobans with integrity, innovation and enthusiasm.

Alternative Formats Available Upon Request.