



CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

Child Development Centres (CDCs) provide services to children with a wide range of physical, neurological, and developmental disabilities (such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder), as well as mental health and behavioural issues. Approximately 30 CDCs in British Columbia provide multidisciplinary therapy and integrated services to more than 15,000 children and their families throughout the province.

Health Science Professionals that commonly provide services for children at CDCs include audiologists, behavioural consultants, child and youth mental health counsellors, child life specialists, dietitians, early childhood educators, family support workers, infant development consultants, key workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, preschool teachers, psychologists, social workers, speech language pathologists, and supported child development consultants.

CDCs specialize in providing services to children from birth to school entry (usually age 5).

CDC services are essential to enable children with special needs to participate in child care and preschool programs, as well as to make a successful transition into the K-12 school system. Unfortunately, there are too many children that never make it off the wait list before they have aged out of this critical phase of support services, making the transition to school more challenging.

Traditionally, most CDCs have focused on addressing the physical and behavioural needs of children with disabilities, but the need to provide emotional, social and psychological supports for these children and their families is growing.

Children with disabilities who do not receive necessary services are less likely to succeed in school, and more likely to require additional ongoing services from MCFD, and the health care and education systems.

Beyond the clear benefits of health equity and addressing the cognitive, social-emotional, and functional needs of young children, early childhood development makes economic sense. Comprehensive birth-to-age-five early childhood development for vulnerable children provides a return of 13% per year as a result of better outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity, and reduced crime.¹ Put another way, for every dollar invested in comprehensive early childhood development, government receives \$6.30 in return in economic, social, and health benefits (referred to as the cost/benefit ratio). The research also indicates a higher return on investment when comprehensive programs begin at birth.

¹ J. Heckman, [There's more to gain by taking a comprehensive approach to early childhood development](#), The Heckman Equation, 2016; World Health Organization & UNICEF, [Early Childhood Development and Disability: A discussion paper](#), 2012.