



Initiatives for Young Children in Prince Edward Island

2019-2024



Government of Prince Edward Island
February 2025

© Government of Prince Edward Island

Printed: Government of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, PE

Date of Publication: February 2025

Suggested citation: Government of Prince Edward Island (2025). Initiatives for Young Children in Prince Edward Island: Current State, Analysis and Recommendations. Charlottetown, PE: Chief Public Health Office, Department of Health and Wellness, Department of Education and Early Years, Department of Justice and Public Safety, Health PEI, Department of Social Development and Seniors, and Department of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population.

Summary

There have been many concerted programs and initiatives directed to young children in PEI in the past 5 years. These efforts reflect a significant investment in the future of Islanders, and as both a government and a province, we can take pride in these achievements.

There have been many new initiatives as well as ongoing work/programs, all of which have had a focus on the first early years for children.

More than seventy (70) initiatives have been identified that directly or indirectly benefit children ages 0-5 and their families in PEI. These initiatives and focused programs span multiple government departments and extend to collaborative efforts outside government, all with a shared focus of supporting positive early childhood outcomes.

Building on the foundation of the previous CPHO Children's Report, a future evaluation of these new and ongoing initiatives would be instrumental in assessing their impact. A renewed Children's Report, grounded in evidence and measurable outcomes, would provide valuable insights into the well-being of young children in PEI.

An ongoing commitment to make sure that there is a coordinated approach to initiatives for young children – supported by regular surveillance and reporting – will make the most of these upstream investments and help build a better future for Island children. Such a commitment will strengthen the foundations of early childhood development, creating lasting benefits for children and for all Islanders.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Purpose	1
Scope	1
Background	1
Initiatives for Young Children	3
Recent Initiatives (2019-2024)	6
Ongoing initiatives (Before 2019)	15
Conclusion	22
References	23

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to summarize recent and ongoing initiatives for young children aged 0-5 years in Prince Edward Island (PEI), with emphasis on ages 0-3. It was based on the input from government departments to identify new initiatives over the past few years as well as ongoing programs with a focus on young children. In essence, this summary is being prepared to assist in the review of and in support of the well-being of young children in PEI.

Early childhood is a time of rapid development of mind and body with lifelong impacts. When provided with positive life experiences that encourage healthy development, and early support when families face challenges, children can reach their highest potential. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for all young children and families. Upstream investments in the wellbeing of young children and families during the early years are more impactful and cost-effective than downstream, reactive interventions.¹

“THERE CAN BE NO KEENER REVELATION OF A SOCIETY’S SOUL THAN THE WAY IN
WHICH IT TREATS ITS CHILDREN.” – NELSON MANDELA

Scope

The scope of this report is based on the following parameters:

- “Young children” means ages 0-5, with emphasis on initiatives for children ages 0-3.
- Perinatal (prenatal) initiatives are within the scope of this report.
- Initiatives that support parents, guardians and caregivers (i.e., grandfamilies) of young children are within the scope of this report.
- Recent initiatives, implemented between 2019-2024, are the primary focus of this report.
- Community-based initiatives are the primary focus of this report.

Background

In 2017, the Chief Public Health Office released the *PEI Children's Report*.² This report explored the relationship between health outcomes for children in PEI, and factors like social determinants of health, health equity, health behaviours, and various risk factors. The purpose of the *Children's Report* was to establish a baseline of key indicators of child health and wellbeing in PEI, and to make recommendations on the health and wellbeing of children in PEI.

In 2018, the Child Wellbeing Measures Working Group, an interdepartmental group, developed a Child Wellbeing Indicator Framework, and a systematic plan for data collection.

More recently, background research was completed related to the proposed *First 1,000 Days Initiative*. This report builds on work completed by summarizing current initiatives for young children.

In 2018, the Child Wellbeing Measures Working Group, an interdepartmental group, completed a report with updates to the indicators set out in the *2017 Children's Report*.³ The purpose of the Child Wellbeing Measures Working Group's report was to develop a set of child wellbeing measures that align with national and/or international indicators – resulting in a Child Wellbeing Indicator Framework, and a systematic plan for data collection. This work supports ongoing monitoring and surveillance of the health and wellbeing of children in PEI.

More recently, extensive background research was completed related to the proposed *First 1,000 Days Initiative*. While this work was interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic response, it resumed with a jurisdictional scan, funding scan by Department, and options for consideration regarding next steps. This report builds upon the work completed to date by summarizing current initiatives for young children in PEI.

Abbreviations:

- **EEY:** Department of Education and Early Years
- **JPS:** Department of Justice and Public Safety
- **HPEI:** Health PEI
- **H&W:** Department of Health and Wellness
- **SDS:** Department of Social Development and Seniors
- **WALP:** Department of Workforce, Advanced Learning and Population

Initiatives for Young Children

More than seventy (70) initiatives were identified that directly or indirectly serve young children ages 0-5 and their families in PEI, with emphasis on ages 0-3.

The initiatives included in this report are divided between “Recent Initiatives” (2019-2024) and “Ongoing Initiatives (before 2019). Within each section, initiatives are categorized according to indicator categories in the PEI Child Wellbeing Indicator Framework.

The purpose of this is to organize initiative around outcomes, and not silos. In some cases, an initiative may apply to multiple indicator categories. The indicator categories, and indicator examples, are:

- **Mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing** (i.e., perinatal mood disorder screening, perinatal mood disorder referrals, access to services for mental and emotional health, child maltreatment, re-report of child maltreatment, foster parent homes, time to permanency).
- **Physical health and wellbeing** (i.e., dental carries, perinatal mood disorder screening, perinatal mood disorder referrals, children born to parents under 18 years old, child maltreatment, re-report of child maltreatment).
- **Economic and material wellbeing** (i.e., children born to parents under 18 years old).
- **Permanence** (i.e., children in out of home care, time to permanency).
- **Safety and security** (i.e., victim of bullying, children born to parents under 18 years old, child maltreatment, re-report of child maltreatment, children in need of protection, children in out-of-home care, foster parent homes, time to permanency, criminal offence charge rate, youth incarceration rate).
- **Social relationships** (i.e., sense of belonging, foster parent homes, criminal offence charge rate, children under different sentencing options, youth incarceration rate).

Prince Edward Island signed the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement in July 2021 with the Government of Canada. The five-year agreement supports initiatives focused on reducing childcare fees, expanding the availability of regulated spaces, and bolster the early childhood workforce. Many of these initiatives are reflected in the 2019-2024 Recent Initiatives table.

The Government of Prince Edward Island is steadfast in its efforts to improve child well-being across the province. Every child deserves the opportunity to grow, thrive, and feel supported in every aspect of their life. In Prince Edward Island, we are committed to creating a brighter future for our youngest residents by addressing the key dimensions of their well-being. From nurturing emotional resilience and physical health to ensuring economic stability, safety, and a sense of belonging, our province is taking meaningful steps to support children and families at every stage of their journey.

Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Well-Being

The emotional and mental health of children and families remains a central focus of Prince Edward Island's child well-being initiatives. Recognizing the importance of early intervention, the province has expanded perinatal mood disorder screening and referral programs to ensure parents and caregivers receive timely support. These measures help lay the groundwork for healthier family dynamics and stronger emotional bonds between parents and children.

In the early years, access to high-quality childcare and education further supports children's emotional development. Programs such as universal pre-kindergarten and affordable childcare create environments where children can thrive. The province is also tackling child maltreatment by addressing its root causes and providing comprehensive support to families in crisis through the Children with Complex Needs Navigation Program.

Foster families play a critical role in providing stability for vulnerable children. Prince Edward Island continues to strengthen foster parent recruitment and training, fostering environments where children in care feel secure and supported. These combined efforts ensure that the emotional and mental well-being of children is prioritized, creating a solid foundation for their future success.

Physical Health and Well-Being

Promoting physical health is vital to ensuring children grow into healthy, capable adults. Prince Edward Island has expanded access to dental care programs to combat preventable conditions such as dental care. The inclusion of perinatal mood disorder screening and referrals as part of routine maternal care also highlights the province's integrated approach to supporting families, addressing both physical and emotional health challenges during critical developmental periods.

Efforts to support young parents further contribute to this goal. Programs aimed at children born to parents under 18 years old provide resources and support systems to ensure both parent and child have access to the tools they need for a healthy start in life. Additionally, child maltreatment prevention initiatives address the physical and emotional impacts of harm, offering a holistic approach to improving children's health and well-being.

Economic and Material Well-Being

Addressing economic challenges faced by families is key to reducing childhood poverty and fostering a better quality of life. Prince Edward Island supports young parents, particularly those under 18 years old, by connecting them with essential resources to ensure their children grow up in stable and nurturing environments.

Investments on the provincial and national levels have completely transformed PEI's early learning and child care system. The government has introduced measures to improve access to affordable early learning and child care spaces, easing financial burdens on families with free universal pre-K programs and \$10 a day child care, while offering crucial developmental opportunities for children. At the same time, efforts have expanded access by investing in new child care spaces and centers. As a result, PEI now boasts more child care centers, spaces, and educators than ever before, as well as clear pathways for long-term sustainability

Permanence

Every child deserves a permanent, loving home, and the province has prioritized efforts to achieve this for children in care. Initiatives aimed at reducing the time to permanency ensure children do not face prolonged uncertainty. By enhancing the foster care system, recruiting more families, and equipping them with the skills needed to provide nurturing homes, the government is fostering stability for children who cannot remain with their biological families.

These efforts are complemented by programs that support children in out-of-home care, helping them transition to permanent placements as quickly and smoothly as possible. By focusing on permanency, Prince Edward Island demonstrates its commitment to creating secure and lasting connections for all children.

Safety and Security

Ensuring the safety and security of children is fundamental to their overall well-being. Programs addressing child maltreatment, re-reports of maltreatment, and children in need of protection reflect the government's commitment to safeguarding vulnerable populations. Specialized initiatives, like the Children with Complex Needs Navigation Program, reduce barriers to accessing services and help families overcome challenges that may place children at risk.

Efforts to combat bullying are also central to creating safe environments where children can thrive. By addressing victimization and promoting respectful relationships, the province is building communities where children feel supported and secure. Youth justice

initiatives, including measures to reduce criminal offence charge rates and youth incarceration, further contribute to safer communities, ensuring children have the opportunity to grow up in environments free from harm.

Social Relationships

Fostering a sense of belonging is essential to children's social development. Through programs that strengthen family bonds, support foster families, and promote inclusivity in schools, early years centres and communities, Prince Edward Island is creating environments where children feel connected and valued.

Youth justice reforms also play a critical role in supporting positive social relationships. By reducing reliance on incarceration and focusing on restorative approaches, the province is helping children rebuild trust and integrate into their communities. These efforts, combined with initiatives to improve foster care and permanency, ensure that all children have the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships and feel a sense of belonging.

Prince Edward Island's holistic approach to child well-being demonstrates its unwavering commitment to the province's youngest residents. By addressing the interconnected aspects of children's lives, the government is building a foundation for healthier, more secure, and prosperous futures for all.

Recent Initiatives (2019-2024)

Child Wellbeing Indicator Category	Initiative Name	Department	Description of Initiative
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Social Assistance Rate Increases	SDS, Social Programs	Financial assistance to support Island families and their children in meeting their basic needs. Since 2019, an additional \$40 million has been allocated towards various rate increases (food rate, basic unit rate, shelter, communication, home maintenance and minor repair, optical, transportation, school age allowance, etc.).
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Social Assistance Liquid Asset Exemption Increase	SDS, Social Program	The liquid asset exemption for Social Assistance clients was increased to bring it in line with that of Assured Income clients. This exemption is based on household composition.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Assured Income (Accessibility Supports) Rate Increases	SDS, Social Programs	Financial assistance to support Island Families and their children in meeting their basic needs. Since 2019, an additional \$40 million has been allocated towards various rate increases (food rate, basic unit rate, shelter, communication, home maintenance and minor repair, optical, transportation, school age allowance, etc.).
Economic and Material Wellbeing	One-Time Payments for Social Assistance and Assured Income Clients	SDS, Social Programs	One-time payments include: 2023, grocery cards to assist with rising food costs (\$50-\$150); 2022, payment of \$150 following Post-Tropical Storm Fiona; 2022, payment of \$150 per household member for inflation mitigation; 2021, supplement of \$200-\$250 per child to the school allowance during COVID-19 response; 2020, payment of \$100 per household member during COVID-19 response; 2020, flat rate increase of \$300 for clients residing with associate families due to COVID-19 pandemic; and 2019, payment of \$110-\$140 plus \$30 per dependent following Post-Tropical Storm Dorian.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	PEI Child Benefit	SDS, Social Programs	The PEI Child Benefit (PEICB) was announced in Budget 2024 and provides low- to medium-income families with a monthly benefit payment to help offset the costs of raising children. This non-taxable benefit from the Government of PEI is administered by the Canada Revenue Agency and compliments the federal Canada Child Benefit.

Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Early Years Centre Low Interest Loan Pilot Program	EEY, Early Years	EEY in partnership with Finance PEI launched the Early Years Centre Low Interest Loan Pilot Program in November 2023. This \$7 million fund offers accessible and affordable financing options at a 3 per cent interest rate to child care centres and developers. The program places an emphasis on increasing access for infants and toddlers in PEI's publicly managed system.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Early Years Centre Expansion Capital Grant	EEY, Early Years	EEY launched an Early Years Centre Expansion Capital Grant in April 2024 to create new licensed early learning and child care spaces for up to \$200,000 to facilitate new construction, renovations, and/or equipment purchases to help meet the urgent need for expanded spaces. The program places an emphasis on increasing access for infants and toddlers in PEI's publicly managed system.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Regulatory changes to the <i>Early Learning and Child Care Act</i>.	EEY, Early Years	The following regulation changes came into effect on December 31, 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maximum licence capacity increased from 80 to 125 - Maximum group size for infants increased from 6 to 12, and requirements for infant group sizes larger than 6 - New titles for certification to support professionalization of the early learning and child care sector - Infants who are 18-22 months old may now spend up to 75% of their time in a larger group of children that includes preschool or school-age children - Staff requirements related to emergency first aid and CPR - Other regulatory amendments.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Funding for pedagogical support positions for EYC	EEY, Early Years	Funding to hire staff to assist with practices designed to enhance quality programming, starting in 2023-2024. The funding was updated in 2024-25 to cover additional hours for pedagogical support staff for average full-time equivalent enrollments over 60.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	ECCE Accelerated Certificate and Diploma Programs	EEY, Early Years	The Early Childhood Assistant Certificate Program is for early childhood educators who hold a current early childhood intern level of certification and have two years of experience working in an early childhood centre. The certificate program is 17 weeks.

Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing			The Early Childhood Care and Education Diploma Program is for early childhood educators who hold a current early childhood associate level of certification and have at least two years of experience working in an early childhood centre. The diploma program is 22 weeks. These programs started in 2022 and will be offered until at least 2026.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	College de l'Île Early Childhood Program	EEY, Early Years	College de l'Île has converted its full-time early childhood program to an accelerated offering. The first Accelerated Diploma program launched in February 2023. There is no experience requirement for this program.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Steps to Success	WALP (administered by Early Childhood Development Association)	A program that introduces underemployed individuals to the early learning and child care sector and supports their career by providing experience and training. The program is a complimentary project to the Accelerated programs provided by Collège de l'Île and Holland College.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Early Childhood Educator Professional Development	EEY, Early Years	EEY and ECDA collaborate to deliver full-day professional development training sessions in person, both Fall and Spring. The ECDA also offers PD sessions throughout the year, outside of the full-day conferences. The Early Childhood Coaching Team from the Early Years Division meets with the ECDA to provide input into the PD session areas of focus.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Early Childhood Educator Wage Increases	EEY, Early Years	Certified early childhood educators have seen a 50% increase in wages and centre directors a 53% increase in wages compared to the 2019 wage grid. There have been 5 wage grid increases for staff working in designated Early Years Centres since 2019.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Early Childhood Educator Defined Contribution Pension Plan	EEY, Early Years	EEY invests in a partnership with the ECDA of PEI to implement and manage a defined contribution pension plan (DCPP) for employees in EYCs. To be eligible for the program, ECDA members must have three (3) months of employment in an EYC. The contribution at both the employee and EYC level is 4% of gross pay. The province provides a

Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing			matching contribution to plan members and an administrative grant to ECDA to offset administration costs.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Childcare Fee Reductions to \$10 Per Day	EEY, Early Years	Canada and PEI signed the <i>Canada-Prince Edward Island Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC)</i> and the <i>Bilateral Early Learning and Child Care Extension Agreements</i> in July 2021. We are in the 4th year of our 5-year agreement. Parent fees in Early Years Centres and licensed Family Home Centres were reduced to \$25 a day in January 2022, \$20 on October 1, 2022, and with the contribution of added provincial funds parent fees went down to \$10 per day on January 1st, 2024. As of January 1, 2024, parent fees in designated Early Years Centres have dropped by an average of 66% since 2020.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Increase Licensed Childcare Spaces	EEY, Early Years	Over 600 new licensed childcare spaces have been added in PEI since July 2021.
Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Publicly Funded Pre-Kindergarten	EEY, Early Years	A universal pre-kindergarten program was launched in September 2021. This is an optional play-based program for all Island children that are at least four years of age on or before December 31 of the year they enroll. There are no parent fees for the core program which offers 15 hours per week from licensed early childhood centres.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Family Court Conciliation Office	JPS	The Family Court Conciliation Office (FCCO) clinicians received family mediation training in the spring of 2023 to provide Parenting Plan Mediation services to families starting in July 2023. The FCCO has completed 37 parenting plan mediations since implementation in July 2023 to March 2024. Clinicians continue to receive relevant training for family mediation.

Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Pyramid to Retention	EEY, Early Years	EEY partnered with the Early Childhood Development Association to launch the Pyramid to Retention to support social and emotional well being for children in their first 5 years, within the Early Learning and Child Care sector in PEI. The Pyramid Model builds on the specialized bank of knowledge that all certified Early Childhood Educators have, building in an extra layer of Social-Emotional Development knowledge through mentorship and training.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Early Intervention Clinical Lead	EEY, Early Years	EEY hired a new Early Intervention Clinical Lead in 2024. This individual is Board-Certified Behaviour Analyst who guides staff in the use of evidence-based supports to help all children succeed, regardless of their diagnosis.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Inclusion Consultants	EEY, Early Years	EEY hired two inclusion consultants and an English/French staff as an Alternative Language consultant to support inclusive practices in Early Years Centres. The inclusion consultants work with Early Years Centres to develop and implement resources and programs designed to serve low income, Indigenous, Black and other racialized communities, newcomers to Canada, official language minorities, and underserved populations.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Addition of Social ABCs Program to Pediatric Psychology Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	The Social ABCs program is an in-home 12-week intervention where parents are coached as to how to improve their child's verbal communication and strengthen relationships.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing Safety and Security	Family Law Navigation	JPS	Piloted in 2022, this service provides wrap-around support for individuals with a child(ren) at any stage of separation or divorce and connects families with the resources they need. This includes providing information about programs and support services, and referrals to appropriate services. In April 2024, the Family Law Navigation website was launched which helps families learn about support and includes a self-referral tool. Approximately 750 parents have participated in the Family Law Navigation services, and the website has been accessed over 3,000 times.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Children with Complex Needs Initiative	Health PEI, Public Health	Initiated in 2019, the Children with Complex Needs Initiative has established standardized methods for wait times and a mechanism for identifying children with complex needs. A population survey was

		and Children's Dev. Services	conducted in 2021 to better understand how many children in PEI have complex needs, and the nature of these needs. The Children with Complex Needs Navigation Program has been developed in 2024 to reduce barriers for families accessing services.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	PEI School Food Program	SDS, PEI School Food Program Inc.	The Department of Social Development and Seniors provides significant operational funding to PEI School Food Program Inc., a not-for-profit organization responsible for the delivery of the school lunch program in public schools across PEI (K-12). With a cost of \$5.75 per meal, the program operates on a pay what you can model. The program is active in both PSB and CSLF schools. NOTE: Impact to K-12 age range.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Children's Summer Food Program	SDS	Each summer, the Department of Social Development and Seniors work with local food vendors and drivers to deliver frozen reheatable meals throughout July and August to school-aged children (K-12) whose families need help accessing healthy foods. NOTE: Impact to K-12 age range.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Expanded Public Health Dental Programs	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	This includes the School Oral Health Preventative Program (SOHPP) and the Provincial Dental Care Program (PDCP). With the development of the PDCP in 2021, basic dental coverage expanded to all low-income individuals and families that meet eligibility criteria, regardless of age and commencing at birth. The SOHPP expanded to provide preventative services to all children aged 0-17 (previously 3-17). The new federal Canadian Dental Care Plan may be an opportunity to leverage federal funds to increase the dental coverage available for low-income children and families, re-allocating provincial funds to decrease gaps in other areas of dental programming.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	School-Aged Physiotherapy Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	First launched as a pilot in 2023, the School-Aged Physiotherapy Program is now permanent with a 1.0 FTE position. The school-aged physiotherapy program enhances mobility, prevents complications and promotes participation for children with complex medical needs.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Well-Baby Clinics for Newborns without a Primary Care Provider	Health PEI, Primary Care and Chronic Disease	Primary Care Community Clinics began at The Four Neighborhood's Health Center in July 2021 to provide access to prenatal and well-baby care for those without a primary care provider. Nurse Practitioners

			provide support to newborn babies for their well-baby checks starting at 2 weeks of age until 18 months of age.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	CHANCES Primary Care – Patient Medical Home Developments	Health PEI, Primary Care and Chronic Disease	CHANCES had begun offering a Nurse Practitioner lead primary care service beginning in 2014. In 2024, these services transitioned from grant funding through the Department of Health and Wellness, to Health PEI, with formal establishment of these primary care services becoming a patient medical home and being located at Four Neighbourhoods Health Centre.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Midwifery Program	Health PEI, Community Speciality Services	Along with direct midwifery services that may occur in hospital or at home, midwives provide prenatal education, lactation support, and prenatal care to unaffiliated patients in partnership with primary care. Midwives are trained to provide low-risk, primary care to clients and babies during preconception, pregnancy, labour, birth, and the postpartum period. There are currently 4.5 FTE midwives working in PEI, with an additional 1.0 FTE expected in Jan 2025.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Perinatal Health Program Review	Health PEI, Community Speciality Services	Focused on reproductive care, the Perinatal Health Program provides system navigation for parents and potential parents. Between July and December 2024, a consulting firm has been engaged to support a broad health systems review and to draft a provincial perinatal health framework.
Safety and Security	Legislative amendments to the <i>Children's Law Act</i>	JPS	Following amendments to the federal <i>Divorce Act</i> the PEI-JPS reviewed and updated provincial family law legislation in 2021 to pursue similar goals to those articulated by the Government of Canada. The changes to provincial legislation reflect best practices in other jurisdictions and model legislation.
Safety and Security	Proclamation of the <i>Child, Youth and Family Services Act</i>	SDS	The <i>Child, Youth and Family Services Act</i> was proclaimed on September 9, 2025 and has replaced the <i>Child Protection Act</i> . The following are the highlights of the new legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The best interests of the child are the paramount consideration for all persons acting or making decisions under the Act - Supports for grandparents and other alternative caregivers are enhanced by clarifying legal custody (temporarily or

			<p>permanently) for children who require out of home placements for child protection concerns;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborative approaches, including family group conferencing and mediation, will enable families to plan and make decisions together about the safety of children; - The length of time a child can be in the temporary care of the Director of Child Protection is reduced to assist with permanency planning and increase the stability of the child's home environment; - Youth aging out of care will be eligible to access supports until the age of 25 (up from 21) to help them transition into adulthood; - Ability to offer families more preventative and early intervention supports through Child and Family Services, such as Family Ties and the Triple P Program, helping prevent families from requiring protective services; - There is no age-limit for children to access court-ordered legal counsel; - Authority for administering the Act has changed from the Director of Child Protection to the Minister of Social Development and Seniors to align with practices in other jurisdictions and support increased transparency and accountability.
--	--	--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Ongoing initiatives (Before 2019)

Child Wellbeing Indicator Category	Initiative Name	Department	Description of Initiative
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Child Support Guidelines Office	JPS	Provides information on the Child Support Guidelines and helps self-represented individuals complete the required court documentation when they apply for child support (both for the first time and to change existing child support orders). Since April 2019, the office has assisted 909 families with child support applications.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Administrative Recalculation	JPS	The Recalculation Officer recalculates child support payments, allowing parents to update child support according to the payor's most recent annual income without going back to court. The Family Law Centre is working on amending the regulations governing the Administrative Recalculation Office in order to broaden the scope of service for families. Since April 2019, the service has assisted over 1,017 families.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Maintenance Enforcement Program	JPS	The Maintenance Enforcement Program (MEP) continues to increase staffing to provide added support to families who utilize MEP. This will help provide faster response times for registration with the program of both new and amended support orders. Since 2019, 1,623 payment orders have been issued.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	School Age Autism Funding	SDS, Social Programs	Available to help parents and designated community-based organizations to offset the costs of hiring one-on-one tutors and aides in home and group settings. Available to school-aged children (4-18).
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Accessibility Supports Program	SDS, Social Programs	The program offers personalized supports and services for adults and children (ages 0-17) with disabilities. Its goal is to empower individuals, children, and their families to access the resources they need to achieve their full potential and actively participate in society.
Economic and Material Wellbeing	Childcare Subsidy	SDS, Social Program	Provides support to low-moderate income families with costs of childcare for children for children ages 0 to 12.

Economic and Material Wellbeing Mental, Emotional and Spiritual Wellbeing	Educational Grants for Early Childhood Educators	EEY, Early Years	Education grants to support attainment of a post-secondary credential among Early Childhood Educators.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Positive Parenting from Two Homes for Kids	JPS	Positive Parenting from Two Homes for Kids is a school-based program for children who are experiencing changes in their lives as a result of separation or divorce. Program updates address: family violence, training materials for new facilitators, and engaging professionals to support children and families. Since 2019 the program has been offered to over 420 children.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Family Service Program	SDS, Child & Family Services, Children's Services	There are two teams that provide parenting education and support as well as supervision of family access for children in care and not in care who have been found to be Children in Need of Protection. Children under 5 years of age: Triple P and Little Eyes Little Ears programs are provided.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Autism Coordination Act	EEY, Early Years	Introduced the <i>Autism Coordination Act</i> in 2018 and strengthening autism support for children in their early years.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Early Years Autism Service	EEY, Early Years	The Early Years Autism Service is committed to providing high quality early intervention and providing a continuum of support as children enter Kindergarten. Early Years Autism Service includes Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) for preschool children and Intensive Kindergarten Support (IKS) for kindergarten students. IBI funding provides between 20-25 hours per week of individualized intensive intervention for each child.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Handle With Care	EEY, Early Years	EEY continues to support delivering the Handle with Care parenting program through Bilateral Agreement funding. This program is a strengths-based, preventative program that supports and promotes parent/caregiver mental wellbeing while providing knowledge that impacts infant, child, and youth mental wellbeing.

Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Dès la naissance Program	EEY, Early Years	EEY provides funding through the Bilateral Agreement to CAP Enfants for the Dès la naissance program. This program seeks to support Acadian, Francophone, exogamous, and Francophile parents, from the birth of their children onwards to give them the tools they need to ensure that French is part of their children's daily lives.
Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Wellbeing	Pediatric Psychology Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	The Pediatric Psychology program consists of an assessment service for children from infancy to early school age for an inquiry about their developmental and cognitive functioning and/or to determine if they present with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. Pediatric Psychology also has an intervention/support service for children referred to or seen for assessment in this service. Supports include the Triple P Stepping Stones program, which supports parents to strengthen relationships, teach new skills, and manage behavioral challenges.
Permanence	Child in Care Teams	SDS, Child & Family Services, Children's Services	There are two provincial teams that provide services and supports to all children in the temporary or permanent custody and guardianship of Child Protection. Children under 5 years of age: a child who is under 6 years of age can only be in the temporary custody of the Director for 18 months (compared to 24 months for children over the age of 6) before a permanent plan is required.
Permanence	Resource Teams	SDS, Child & Family Services, Children's Services	There are two teams that manage the foster care program. Resource teams secure placements for all children in care, complete necessary assessments, and reviews of all foster families, provide ongoing support, and develop / implement recruitment and retention initiatives. Children under 5 years of age: Specific training is provided to foster parents caring for this age group including Period of Purple Crying, Nutrition, Infant Care, etc.
Permanence	Grandparent and Alternative Care Provider Program, Children's Services	SDS, Child & Family Services, Children's Services	One provincial team that provides service and support to all our children who require out of home care that are not in the legal custody and guardianship of the Director of Child Protection. This team assesses and supports clients, and completes necessary reviews. There are two streams: 1) Out of Home Care for short term active Child Protection files with goal of reuniting with parents; and 2) Child Support Services for longer term permanent plans with Caregivers.

Permanence	Adoption Services	SDS, Child & Family Services, Children's Services	This is a provincial team that provides assessment, training, and support for families wanting to adopt through the child protection system. The team provides post adoption services to individuals and Supported Adoption supports to families.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Audiology Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	The provincial audiology program provides audiological assessments and intervention for clients with hearing health concerns and for the development of the early hearing detection and intervention program on PEI. This includes supporting the infant hearing screening program administered at the QEH and PCH, and collaboration with the Midwifery Program.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Community Nutrition Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	The Community Nutrition program is a provincial program with the objective of promoting healthy lifestyles by increasing nutrition knowledge and behavior change through individual nutrition counselling and group education. Dietitians are responsible for the assessment, management, and follow-up of clients referred to the program such as low-income families, nutritionally high-risk pregnant and postpartum people, infants, and children, including children with complex needs. The Community Nutrition program has satellite offices in Souris, Montague, Charlottetown, Summerside, O'Leary, and Alberton.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Eye See Eye Learn Program Overview	Health PEI, Primary Care and Chronic Disease	The Eye See Eye Learn Program provides all pre-kindergarten and kindergarten-age children in PEI with one free eye exam and one free pair of glasses, if needed.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Public Health Nursing Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	Programs and services within this larger program include: New Beginnings Program, Parental Education (Prenatal), Launching Little Ones, Best Start, Lactation Consultant Services, and others. These sub-programs, and the services they provide, are expanded on below. There are 8 Public Health Nursing offices across PEI (Souris, Montague, Charlottetown, Summerside, O'Leary, Tignish, Wellington and Alberton).
Physical Health and Wellbeing	New Beginnings Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	The New Beginnings Program offers universal, community-based screening, assessment, health promotion and anticipatory guidance to postpartum women, newborns, and their families up to 8 weeks postpartum. All registered births attended by a Physician or Midwife

			are referred to the Program, ensuring early intervention for health concerns by utilizing the BC Nursing Care Pathways for Postpartum and Newborn Care and the Rourke Baby Record.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Launching Little Ones Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	Immunizations, health screening assessments, health promotion messaging and anticipatory guidance and referrals to other community services. All children in PEI can access this program and are given an appointment during the New Beginnings Program. Clinic appointments are provided to children at 2, 4, 6, 12, 18 months and 4 years of age. Evidenced based tools are used within the program such as the WHO Growth Charts, Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), Rourke Baby Record, Canadian Dental Caries Risk Assessment Tool (C-CRAT-see below) and NutriStep screening tool. Referral pathways exist for all assessments completed by PHN.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Lactation Consultant Services	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	Public Health Nursing's Lactation Consultants offer in-person and telephone/consultation services. In-person services are offered at Public Health Nursing locations in Charlottetown (serving Queens and Kings regions) and Summerside (serving Prince region). Telephone consultation services are offered Island-wide. In addition to providing service to individual clients/families, the lactation consultants also provide lactation education and support to Public Health Nurses and other health care providers.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	School Therapy Occupational Therapy Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	Through this program, OT services are accessible to kindergarten children attending public schools within both the Public Schools Branch (PSB) and La Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) schools. The STOT program supports equitable and timely access to OT services for kindergarten children attending public schools, with the goal of supporting kindergarten students with an accessible physical environment, manageable sensory environment, a positive transition into school, school readiness skills and addressing OT related school-based needs within the school environment.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Speech-Language Pathology Program	Health PEI, Public Health and Children's Dev. Services	Children with communication difficulties benefit from early identification and support from their communication partners. Speech-language pathologists deliver best practice approaches to provide all children with options to communicate, including high tech

			systems, at earlier ages. Speech-language pathologists support family members to create successful communication opportunities with their children. Health PEI speech-language pathology program has an open referral process.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Primary Care Services	Health PEI, Primary Care and Chronic Disease	Primary care services focus on holistic well child examinations (aligned with the Rourke Baby Record), primary care and medical services (including management of acute illnesses and complex health needs) for all children as well as children and newborns without a Primary Care Provider. This involves referral to and coordination of care with specialists as indicated as well as a range of in province diagnostic services and out of province care to address the needs of children.
Physical Health and Wellbeing	Diabetes Education and Support	Health PEI, Primary Care and Chronic Disease	Offers education, support and diabetes management advice for individuals who are living with or at risk of developing diabetes. Pediatric diabetes support is provided by two diabetes educators (one RN and one dietitian) for children Island wide. The clinicians divide their time between Charlottetown and Summerside.
Safety and Security	Supervised Parenting Time and Exchange Program	JPS	The Supervised Parenting Time and Exchange Program (SPTEP) has increased the number of referral sources to increase access to the program for families. The SPTEP has added a satellite location in Kensington and continues to secure locations as needed by families in rural areas. Since 2019, the SPTEP has assisted 157 families.
Safety and Security	Turning Point Program	JPS	The Turning Point Program is an intimate partner violence intervention/counselling program primarily for men involved in the criminal justice system.
Safety and Security	New Ways for Families Programming	JPS	Families experiencing high-conflict separation or divorce can be referred into New Ways for Families® programming offered through the Family Law Centre. This programming empowers parents with skills and strategies to manage high-conflict situations. For this training to be covered by JPS, families must be referred by the Family Court Conciliation Office or the Office of the Children's Lawyer.
Safety and Security	Intake and Assessment	SDS, Child & Family Services, Child Protection	There is one provincial team that receives and assesses all child protection reports. Reports that meet criteria for investigation are assigned a response time.

Safety and Security	Investigations, Child Protection	SDS, Child & Family Services, Child Protection	There are 4 teams that investigate Child Protection Reports that are assigned a specific response time of either less than 24 hours or less than 5 days. For children under 5 years of age age is considered a factor when determining a response time.
Safety and Security	Focused Intervention	SDS, Child & Family Services, Child Protection	There are 4 teams that work with families when a child is found to be in need of protection or is at risk of being in need of protection. This team develops and monitors case plans to alleviate the child protection concerns present.
Safety and Security	Indigenous Services	SDS, Child & Family Services, Child Protection	There is one provincial team that works collaboratively with Lennox Island First Nation, Abegweit First Nation, MCPEI and the PRIDE Program to work specifically with Indigenous Families. This team provides Investigations, Focused Intervention Services as well as Children's Services.
Safety and Security	Best Start Program	Health PEI, CHANCES (contracted)	The Best Start Program is a provincial community-based, in-home visiting program that targets high-risk families and assists them in developing practical skills in childcare in an effort to prevent child abuse and neglect. The program is administered by CHANCES INC. and offered through Family Resource Centres across the province. Health PEI Public Health Nurses are the referring source by offering all families who participate in the New Beginnings Program the opportunity to be screened for the Best Start Program.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to summarize recent and ongoing initiatives for young children in PEI, and to offer analysis and recommendations to support the wellbeing of young children.

Early childhood is a time of rapid development of mind and body that is critical to lifelong health and wellbeing. It is a brief window of opportunity to ensure that children are set up for success and can reach their highest potential.

Upstream investments in the wellbeing of young children during these early years are more impactful and cost-effective than downstream, reactive interventions.⁴

With many initiatives in place for young children, it is important to set clear objectives for the wellbeing of young children, and to ensure that initiatives are well coordinated and effectively address those objectives. The performance of initiatives should be monitored on an ongoing basis in relation to the wellbeing of young children. For example, are initiatives having a positive impact on the wellbeing of young children, and if so to what degree? The Office of the CPHO could lead, with support from other government departments, **a follow-up Children's Report, based on an updated Child Wellbeing Indicator Framework, to assist in understanding needs and monitoring performance.**

Given that initiatives for young children are implemented by multiple departments and agencies, **yearly reporting to CCOP (for instance) could help set and maintain clear objectives regarding child wellbeing and ensure that initiatives are well coordinated.** This could include integrated budget management planning to coordinate funding across departments and agencies and integrated data collection and reporting to support performance monitoring and public health surveillance.

There have been many concerted programs and initiatives which have been added to ongoing children's focus in the past 5 years. As a government and as a province, we should be proud of these investments for the future of our Islanders. An ongoing commitment to make sure that there is a coordinated approach to initiatives for young children – supported by regular surveillance and reporting – will make the most of these upstream investments, and will help build a better future for Island children and all Islanders.

References

¹ Live Well PEI. (2024). Levels of Prevention. <https://www.livewellpei.ca/about/health-promotion/levels-of-prevention>

² Government of Prince Edward Island. (2017). Prince Edward Island Children's Report 2017. <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/publication/prince-edward-island-childrens-report-2017>

³ Government of Prince Edward Island. (2018). Child Wellbeing Measures Working Group. Final Report.

⁴ Live Well PEI. (2024). Levels of Prevention. <https://www.livewellpei.ca/about/health-promotion/levels-of-prevention>

