

# Our Research and Evaluation

## Focus Areas

### I. Early Childhood Development

Evidence from neuroscience, developmental psychology, social sciences, anthropology, epidemiology and other disciplines has demonstrated that an investment in early childhood development (0 to 5 years) establishes a foundation for well-being. Policy initiatives that promote supportive relationships and rich learning opportunities for young children create a strong foundation for educational achievement, productivity in the workplace and solid citizenship in the community.<sup>i</sup>

### II. Middle Childhood and Youth Development

Building on early years, middle childhood (6 to 12 years) development continues to be heavily influenced by factors associated with families and communities. Children benefit from opportunities to play and learn with other children. Entering the education system and participating in community activities (e.g. sports, art, music etc.) marks the beginning of formal and informal education. At this stage children gain knowledge, learn skills, strengthen independence, and reach greater maturity in physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.

### III. Family Capacity Building

Stable and nurturing relationships are critical to healthy child development and well-being. Families balance the demands of raising children with the demands of work outside of the home; drawing support from the communities to which they belong.<sup>ii</sup> Policy initiatives that promote positive parenting and support healthy, safe environments enhance family capacity.

### IV. Community Capacity Building and Strengthening

Children and families are nested within communities. Community capacity building supports child and family well-being by promoting the ‘capacity’ of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to problems in a way that helps them shape and exercise control over their physical, social, economic and cultural environments<sup>iii</sup>.

“We believe that beings thrive when there is a web of interconnectedness between the individual and the community, and between the community and nature. Everything we do, every decision we make, affects our family, our community, it affects the air we breathe, the animals, the plants, the water in some way. Each of us is totally dependent on everything else.”– Evelyn Steinhauer<sup>iv</sup>

### V. Tracking Long-Term Outcomes

Tracking long term outcomes of public policies, programs and services is critical to understanding and improving effectiveness and increasing of accountability. The process requires long term planning and building of outcome tracking capacities so that relevant data and information can be collected and monitored at program, system and population level.

---

<sup>i</sup> *The Science of Early Childhood Development* (2007). National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.  
<http://www.developingchild.net>

<sup>ii</sup> *In the Best Interests of Children and Families: A Discussion of Early Childhood Education and Care in Alberta*.  
<https://www.muttart.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/> (November 2010)

<sup>iii</sup> Western Australian Department of Community Development (2006)

<sup>iv</sup> Alberta. Alberta Education. Aboriginal Services Branch and Learning and Teaching Resources Branch. “Our words, our ways: teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners,” (Edmonton, Alberta, 2005) 16.