October, 2015

Prepared by the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Prepared for Alberta’s Promise
The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (The Centre) was established to support and disseminate research knowledge and evidence on policy issues related to improving the well-being and health of children and youth. The Centre is seen as an innovative leader in the development and dissemination of policy relevant evidence.

The Centre is collaborating with Alberta’s Promise, which was established to bring together business and community leaders to be champions for Alberta’s children and youth.

Alberta’s Promise focuses on five promises:

1. **A Healthy Start**: Focusing on the growth and well-being of children in their early years and supporting parents.

2. **Caring Adults**: Providing support and guidance to children and youth through mentoring, coaching and volunteering.

3. **Lifelong Learning**: Supporting the development of a passion for knowledge and skill development throughout life.

4. **Child and Youth Friendly Communities**: Providing safe, welcoming and supportive communities where families have access to a broad range of services essential for the healthy development of children and youth.

5. **Opportunities to Contribute**: Providing venues for children and youth to engage in and contribute to their communities.

Alberta’s Promise wants to ensure that its work is based on the best available evidence. This includes summarizing the evidence behind each of the five promises. The current review synthesizes the literature on Child and Youth Friendly Communities. Please see Alberta’s Promise for reviews and summaries of evidence for each of the remaining promises.

**RECOMMENDED CITATION**


Questions about this literature review can be directed to CVandenberge@research4children.com.

**KEYWORDS**

child, child friendly, community, engagement, family friendly, participation, youth, youth friendly
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
Alberta’s Promise Child and Youth Friendly Communities promise states “I promise to provide safe, caring communities in which children and youth can grow”. The promise involves providing safe, welcoming and supportive communities where families have access to a broad range of services essential for the healthy development of children and youth.

Following is a synthesis of literature on topics related to friendly communities for children and youth. These concepts include:

- child and youth accessibility;
- welcoming environments for children and youth;
- child and youth participation;
- and aspects of child and youth friendly communities.

Albertan and Canadian examples of aspects of these communities are highlighted throughout the review.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION
Alberta’s Promise Child and Youth Friendly Communities promise calls for all community members to “promise to provide safe, caring communities in which children and youth can grow”. The scope of child and youth friendly community initiatives can range from informal child and youth groups to larger municipal strategies (Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009). This review provides a summary of the research literature on Child and Youth Friendly Communities.

2.0 METHODS

**Database Searches**
Academic literature on Child and Youth Friendly Communities was identified through a database search of the following databases:
- Academic OneFile
- Academic Search Complete
- Canadian Health Research Collection
- PsycINFO
- Social Services
- SocINDEX
- Social Work
- Web of Science

Databases were searched using the following keywords and limits were used to only identify friendly community literature for children and youth from the past 10 years. An effort was also made to focus on literature from Canada and specifically Alberta.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Child and Youth Friendly Communities Search Terms</strong></th>
<th><strong>Limits</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>access to nature</td>
<td>child*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active transportation</td>
<td>youth*</td>
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<tr>
<td>caring community</td>
<td>Alberta</td>
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<td>child friendly</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>child injury</td>
<td>2005-2015</td>
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<td>connectedness</td>
<td>* indicates exploded terms</td>
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<td>environmental pollutants</td>
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<td>friendly cities</td>
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<td>healthy built environments</td>
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<td>neighbourhood safety</td>
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<td>supportive environment</td>
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<td>walkability</td>
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<td>youth friendly</td>
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**Webpage Searches**
The following organization’s websites were also searched for articles related to friendly communities for children and youth:
- [Early Child Development Mapping Project Alberta](#)
- [Canadian Institute of Child Health](#)
- [Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and Environment](#)
- [Injury Prevention Centre](#)
- [National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health](#)
- [UNICEF, Child Friendly Cities Initiative](#)
3.0 RESULTS
Literature was identified on concepts relating to child and youth friendly communities. Three overarching topics related to child and youth friendly communities are discussed. These include child and youth accessibility, welcoming environments for children and youth and child and youth participation. This is followed by a more specific discussion of elements of child and youth friendly communities. Albertan and Canadian examples of aspects of child and youth friendly communities are highlighted throughout the review.

4.0 CHILD AND YOUTH ACCESSIBILITY
Much of the literature around child and youth friendly communities discusses the accessibility of programs and services for children, youth and families. It is important to note that there are many facets of accessibility including knowledge, physical, financial, and cultural accessibility (City of Surrey, 2009). Knowledge accessibility refers to children, youth and families having an awareness of the programs or services available to them in their community. Physical accessibility involves children and youth having active and public transportation options to get to the locations important to them (e.g., school, library, parks). Financial accessibility refers to program user fees that are reasonable for children, youth and families and that there are fee reduction options for those from low-income households. Finally, cultural accessibility notes that programs and services should be inclusive of those from a diversity of religions and ethnicities.

5.0 WELCOMING ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
Programs and services should be welcoming environments for children, youth and families. This can include greeting children and youth and providing them with for example a giveaway item (e.g., sticker), as well as building relationships with families. Training opportunities should be provided for staff members to learn about child and youth friendly communities, and how to interact and work with children and youth (Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009).

Welcoming environments also involve having facilities that children, youth and families need. For example (Howard, 2006):
- parking spaces for new or expectant mothers;
- diaper changing stations;
- spaces for mothers to breastfeed;
- family washrooms;
- spaces (e.g., waiting rooms) with toys and books for children;
- and spaces that accommodate strollers.

6.0 CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION
Child and youth participation recognizes that children and youth should be part of the decisions, policies, programs and environments that affect their lives (Pancer, Rose-Krasnor & Loiselle, 2002). Children and youth can contribute meaningfully to conversations such as planning parks, setting up cultural events and providing input on educational policies (Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, JCSH, 2014). Consistent with this youth in the Calgary Vital Signs (2012) survey requested increased awareness and opportunities to share their voice. Youth also requested that all levels of government to consult and/or include youth.

Two pieces of literature are commonly discussed when examining the concept of child and youth participation. These are Hart’s (1992) Ladder of Participation and the Youth Engagement Spectrum (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2013; adapted from the HeartWood Centre). Both show a spectrum of child and youth engagement from adult initiated and directed activities on the lower end that involve little participation, to child and youth initiated and directed activities at the higher end. It is
at these higher levels where children and youth are informed, consulted, have an opportunity to take on leadership roles, and participate in decision-making. The higher children and youth are engaged on the ladder or spectrum, the higher the educational value for them (Tennina & Dominick, n.d.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manipulation</th>
<th>Decoration</th>
<th>Tokenism</th>
<th>Assigned But Informed</th>
<th>Consulted &amp; Informed</th>
<th>Adult Initiated Shared Decisions</th>
<th>Child/Youth Initiated &amp; Directed</th>
<th>Child/Youth Initiated Shared</th>
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<td><strong>Degrees of Participation</strong></td>
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Figure 1: Hart’s (1992) Ladder of Participation

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participation in Programs/Services</th>
<th>Program / Organizational Assistance</th>
<th>Informal Influence</th>
<th>Formal Roles in Policy / Decision Making</th>
<th>Youth / Adult Partnerships</th>
<th>Youth-Led</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degrees of Participation</strong></td>
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Figure 2: Youth Engagement Spectrum (Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2013; adapted from the HeartWood Centre)

Governments and organizations can use the above figures to gauge how they currently engage youth and how they would like to engage them in the future (JCSH, 2014). For more information on the steps in Hart’s Ladder of Participation please see the City of Edmonton’s Guide for Involving Young People in Civic Matters (2008). For more information on the Youth Engagement Spectrum please see the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development’s Youth Engagement Toolkit Resource Guide (2013).

Children and youth’s engagement in their community is often a result of whether there are factors present that make participation easier and more accessible to them (Jordan & Krumnow, 2014). Youth may initially become involved in youth engagement activities as a result of parents, friends, or school (e.g., volunteer hours needed to graduate; Pancer, Rose-Krasnor & Loiselle, 2002). Once youth are involved, how they are engaged by others is important. Engagement should be relationship-based and reciprocal, meaning information is exchanged between adults and youth (JCSH, 2014). Additionally, children and youth’s continued engagement will be sustained by their positive experiences within a supportive environment. Youth receiving feedback or having an opportunity to observe how their input was used will also encourage sustained engagement (Pancer, Rose-Krasnor & Loiselle, 2002).

If child and youth participation on a project or initiative is a goal of your organization, it is important to include them early on so that they can provide planning input (JCSH, 2014). Some organizations may choose to recruit youth on their own or they may partner with an existing group or youth organization that can assist with recruitment. When recruiting, it is important to engage a diverse range of youth (e.g., ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, lived experience) to ensure that all relevant opinions are represented (JCSH, 2014). Partnering youth organizations can also assist with developing activities and supporting youth’s involvement (JCSH, 2014).

For some practical ideas on how to involve children and youth see the City of Edmonton’s Guide for Involving Young People in Civic Matters (2008, p. 8). Some suggestions include forming a youth council for your community or organization, having youth member(s) serve on relevant committees, or having youth as paid staff members of your organization. Other options include hosting youth recognition.
awards and providing opportunities for school or youth groups to observe different levels of government in action (City of Surrey, 2009; Fronczek, 2001).

City Hall School, City of Edmonton

City Hall School in Edmonton is a week-long learning experience for children in Grades 1 through 9. Children have an opportunity to learn about municipal government through mock city council sessions, as well as visits to the Mayor’s office and with city councilors. Class applications to City Hall School open each Spring to be selected for the following school year.

Some of the benefits to youth as a result of their participation in community matters include improved self-confidence, self-esteem, self-competence, employment and social skills, and understanding of government (City of Edmonton, 2008; JCSH, 2014; Pancer, Rose-Krasnor & Loiselle, 2002). Youth also benefit from being exposed to other involved youth, role models and ultimately improved programs and services as a result of their participation.

7.0 CHILD AND YOUTH FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Some of the first international attention toward child and youth friendly communities began with UNICEF’s launch of the Child Friendly Cities initiative in 1996 (Tennina & Dominick, n.d.). The initiative was intended to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring that communities are livable places for children and youth.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, applies to child under the age of 18, and was adopted by the United Nations on November 20, 1989. It is now the most widely ratified human rights treaty with 193 countries endorsing the Convention. When the laws of a country provide better protection for children’s rights than the articles in the Convention, those laws supersede the Convention in that country. The Convention has a total of 54 Articles that fall under four general principles:

1. Guiding Principles: General requirements for all rights.
2. Survival and Development Rights: These cover the basic rights to life, survival and development of child and youth’s full potential. They also include the right to education and health care.
3. Protection Rights: The rights of protection include the right to be protected from abuse, neglect, and to be kept safe from harm.
4. Participation Rights: These rights allow children to have an active voice in matters that affect them.

Canada ratified the Convention in 1991 and its optional protocols in the years they were introduced. The Public Health Agency of Canada is responsible for the Convention’s implementation and Justice is responsible for its legislative implementation. Canada’s ratification of the Convention is celebrated with National Child Day, which is held each year on November 20.

Articles 2 (non-discrimination), 3 (best interests), 4 (right to life and maximum development), and 12 (listening to children and respecting their views) of the Convention are especially relevant to the discussion around child and youth friendly communities (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004).
UNICEF defines a Child Friendly City as a community that guarantees the right of every child and youth to be able to (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004):

- influence decisions about their city;
- express their opinion on the city they want;
- participate in family, community and social life;
- receive basic services such as health care, education and shelter;
- drink safe water and have access to proper sanitation;
- be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse;
- walk safely in the streets on their own;
- meet friends and play;
- have green spaces;
- live in an unpolluted environment;
- participate in cultural and social events;
- and be equal community citizens with access to services, regardless of their ethnic origin, religion, income, gender or disability.

Work towards becoming a child and youth friendly community can come from the top down, through a government resolution, from the bottom up, such as from a neighbourhood initiative, or from a combination of approaches (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004).

For those using a top down approach, UNICEF has developed a Framework for Action for how local governments can translate child and youth friendly practices into local government processes while also providing room for adaptation to the local context. The framework identifies nine building blocks (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004):

1. **Children’s Participation:** This building block involves promoting opportunities for children and youth to share their views on issues that affect them, as discussed earlier, as well as using a child and youth lens in the decision-making processes.
2. **Child Friendly Legal Framework:** This is accomplished by ensuring that the legislation under the control of communities promotes and protects children’s rights.
3. **Children Rights Strategy:** This block involves developing a strategy for building a child friendly community based on the rights identified in the Convention.
4. **Children’s Rights Unit:** Local governments who are interested in undertaking this work should designate a children’s rights unit to ensure priority is given to children and youth perspectives.
5. **Child Impact Assessment and Evaluation:** Governments should have a system for determining the impact of its laws, projects, policies and practices on children and youth. Assessments of impact should be conducted before, during and after any implementation.
6. **Children’s Budget:** In order to conduct this work, appropriate resources should be allocated through a children’s budget.
7. **State of the Children Reports**: This block involves collecting regular information on the state of children and youth in the community to help inform decision making, evaluate the outcomes of current efforts and track progress across time.

8. **Making Children’s Rights Known**: Communities can assist in spreading awareness about the rights of children and youth.

9. **Independent Advocacy for Children**: The final building block concerns supporting community agencies in promoting and advocating for children’s rights.

Each of the building blocks also has a checklist that can be used to help develop and monitor the activities related to Child Friendly Cities.

### Aboriginal Child Friendly Community Toolkit

The Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia have developed a toolkit that can be used for Aboriginal child friendly communities (Sterling-Collins & Baxter, 2010).

It includes worksheets to assess the child friendliness of the community’s spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual development opportunities. Intellectual development includes opportunities for learning and free play for example. The spiritual component includes opportunities for elder involvement as well as chances to attend community gatherings. Being part of healthy relationships and receiving family support is part of the emotional component and nutritional wellness and prenatal and postnatal supports form part of the physical component.

![Figure 4: Indicators and the Four Areas of Development in Aboriginal Child Friendly Communities](image)

Although the term “city” often used when discussing this work, UNICEF notes that the concept of a Child Friendly City can apply to communities of any size (e.g., small, large, urban, rural; Tennina & Dominick, n.d.). While there are basic aspects of child and youth friendly communities, there is no one model. Building a child and youth friendly community will depend on the needs of those in that community, and will involve a combination of policies, program and services (City of Surrey, 2009).

Examples of Canadian communities that have worked toward being child and youth friendly include **Abbotsford**, Calgary, **Edmonton**, Ottawa, Sudbury, **Surrey**, **West Vancouver** and municipalities throughout **Quebec**. Each of the community strategies began with a consultation process with residents. The strategies were then developed and municipal staff was dedicated to their implementation. Each of the strategies also includes an ongoing review and evaluation process.
The City of Edmonton’s **Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy** is an effort to “make Edmonton a more child friendly place that recognizes and reflects the needs of children and young people” (City of Edmonton, 2005a, p. 2). It begins with the foundational principal of partnerships and collaboration which weaves its way throughout the strategy and demonstrates how the work will be accomplished. Its three goals and building blocks represent what will be achieved through the strategy. Specifically, the first goal concentrates on advocating for opportunities to share the voice of children and youth as well as generating awareness of issues facing these groups. The second goal of accessibility aims to provide all children and youth with the opportunity to participate in programs and services. The final goal strives to ensure that city policies, services and programs are a good fit for children, youth and their families.

**Figure 5: Child Friendly Edmonton Goals and Building Blocks**

The City of Edmonton also developed a **Child Friendly Lens** tool that can be used to plan or assess the child friendliness of the city’s or external partners programs, services, facilities, and policies (City of Edmonton, 2005b). The tool is centered around five views, that:

- children have a voice and understand their responsibility to themselves and others;
- children feel safe and are protected;
- children can participate freely;
- children play, have fun, make friends and develop skills;
- and children feel welcome, respected, and have a sense of belonging.

Respondents indicate their levels of agreement with a series of statements such as “**Staff and volunteers make children/youth and their families feel welcome**”. Each section is followed by an opportunity for respondents to reflect upon actions that can be taken to improve the child friendliness of their program or policy. Similar tools have been developed for the **Abbotsford Child and Youth Friendly Strategy** and by the **Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia**.

Other aspects of child and youth friendly communities include:

- arts and culture opportunities;
- housing;
- businesses;
- media;
- community safety, policing and justice services;
- organized sport and physical recreation;
- early childhood education and school age care;
- parks and nature;
- healthy environment;
- play in built environments;
- health services;
- social and family support services;
- transportation;
- and workplaces.

Detailed information on each of these aspects of child and youth friendly communities follows.
7.1 Arts and Culture
Children and youth should have opportunities to learn about their own as well as other cultures (Fronczek, 2001). There should also be chances to learn about the arts through school and in community settings. For example, children and youth programs at local galleries and museums (Fronczek, 2001). A survey of artists, educators, art organizations and funders found that arts learning is most often provided to elementary aged students in schools and as children grow older these opportunities diminish (Patterson & Campbell, 2013). They also noted that there were few opportunities for arts learning for preschool children. Similar to these recommendations youth in the Calgary Vital Signs (2012) survey requested lower costs for arts and culture events, as well as reduced admission to art galleries, museums and performances. Communities that would like to evaluate how friendly their community is in terms of access to arts and culture can use this checklist from the Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia.

7.2 Businesses
Businesses can contribute to child and youth friendly communities by creating welcoming environments (see the WELCOMING section), implementing family friendly employment practices (see the Workplaces section) and partnering with organizations that benefit children, youth and families.

Child and youth friendly businesses are those that welcome children and their families by greeting them and through their physical structures. This includes being able to accommodate strollers and have facilities such as baby changing stations, family bathrooms and spaces for breast-feeding mothers. Youth should also be welcomed and treated with respect when shopping without their families (Fronczek, 2001). Businesses can also be youth friendly by providing training and work opportunities for youth (Fronczek, 2001). Consistent with this, as part of the Calgary Vital Signs (2012) survey, youth identified having more teen friendly employers as a key priority.

Chambers of commerce can themselves be child and youth friendly by considering establishing youth committees that could provide feedback on business policies and practices from a youth perspective (Fronczek, 2001). Chambers could set criteria and identify child and youth friendly businesses in the community and provide a directory of these businesses for the community to support (Fronczek, 2001). They could also host child and youth friendly business awards (City of Surrey, 2009).

7.3 Community Safety, Policing and Justice Services
Neighborhoods with high levels of crime tend to be more densely populated, of mixed use (businesses and residences) areas, have a mobile population, more single-parent households, more buildings in a state of disrepair and higher poverty levels. Children and youth living in these neighbourhoods are more likely to witness or become victims of crime themselves. Those who witness violence or crime are more likely to display aggression, stress, withdrawal, delinquency and lower school achievement (Child Trends, 2013; Family and Community Support Services, FCSS, Calgary, 2014).

A sense of community safety can be real, in terms of the presence or absence of the characteristics above, or perceived, in terms parents feeling confident to for example let their children play in the front yard alone. Several studies have demonstrated a relationship between parent perceptions of neighbourhood safety and children’s physical activity levels. When parents perceive their neighbourhood to be unsafe, they are less likely to allow their children to walk to parks to play or to allow their children to ride their bike to a friend’s house.
Lee et al. (2015) found that older children and boys were frequently given permission by parents to play independently away from home and for longer periods of time. Parents safety concerns, for example about strangers and traffic, were the most frequently cited barriers to their children having the opportunities to participate in independent play. As a result of these barriers children are less likely to engage in physical activity and are more likely to be overweight (Child Trends, 2013; Cooper & Murphey, 2014; FCSS Calgary, 2014). Fortunately a recent survey of Calgary families with young children found that 79% of respondents felt that their neighbourhood was safe (Bateman, 2013).

Child friendly communities should have safe routes to school and parks, that are well lit and marked. There should also be community and policing strategies to address criminal activities that target children. Children and youth should have opportunities to build positive relationships with police officers. For example by having chances to interact with police liaison officers in their schools or officers at community police stations (Fronczek, 2001). If children or youth do have to interact with police or justice services, staff should treat them with respect and should inform them about their rights (Fronczek, 2001). If you would like to check how child and youth friendly your community is, complete these checklists about safety, policing and justice services.

**Office of the Child and Youth Advocate Alberta (OCYA)**

The OCYA advocates for children and youth who are receiving child intervention services or are involved in the youth justice system in Alberta. OCYA advocates for youth’s rights, interests and viewpoints to be respected. They do this by providing access to legal representation, raising awareness about child and youth rights, and advocating for children and youth with decision makers.

![Figure 6: The OCYA Advocacy Practice Framework](#)

**7.4 Early Childhood Education and School Age Care**

Child and youth friendly communities should have access to early education services such as preschools. There should also be childcare services available such as full day care for children as well as before and after school care for school aged children (Fronczek, 2001). To check on the friendliness of early childhood education and school-age care in your community respond to the questions on this checklist.

**Early Child Development Mapping Project Alberta (ECMap)**

ECMap was a five-year project by Alberta Education that conducted research on early childhood development in Alberta and built community coalitions to respond to local needs. Contact information for each coalition by community is available at [http://www.ecmap.ca/community-development/coalitions/contact-your-coalition.html](http://www.ecmap.ca/community-development/coalitions/contact-your-coalition.html). One of the pieces of information that ECMap used in its work is the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which is a tool that measures the development of groups of five-year-old children.
7.5 Healthy Environment

It is important that children grow up in a community with clear air (indoors and outdoors), water and protection from toxins to support their physical and cognitive development. Children eat, drink and breathe more than adults do and as such they are at greater risk of being exposed to toxins through breathing, eating, skin contact or prenatally (Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and Environment, 2008). Exposure to environmental pollutants can cause negative physical and cognitive impacts for children and youth (FCSS Calgary, 2014; Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and Environment, 2008).

7.6 Health Services

Health and community services that are related to child and youth friendly communities include (Fronczek, 2001):

- home visitation programs;
- well baby clinics;
- early intervention programs;
- child development programs;
- parent education and support programs;
- community kitchens;
- and toy libraries.

As part of the Calgary Vital Signs (2012) survey youth were asked about their priorities regarding health services. They requested more youth health clinics as well as improved mental health and addictions services for youth. To assess the child and youth friendliness of the health services in your community have a look at these questions.

7.7 Housing

Child and youth friendly housing should be located in areas that are safe from traffic, pollution and other hazards (Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009). Multi-unit dwellings should also provide play spaces in shared areas. Housing providers should ensure that their rental or sales agreements do not discriminate against families or place restrictions on the play or recreation activities of children and youth (Fronczek, 2001). Community services should also be available to help families locate affordable housing (Fronczek, 2001). Housing services can be evaluated in terms of how child and youth friendly they are with the following tool.

7.8 Media

Media should promote an awareness of issues that are important to children and youth. This can be accomplished by dedicating space to these issues from the perspectives of children and youth themselves (Fronczek, 2001). It also includes providing media literacy training for children and youth, so that they have the skills to play, learn and work in the digital world (Fronczek, 2001). The child and youth friendliness of community media services can be evaluated by completing the following questions.
7.9 Organized Sport and Physical Recreation
Parents report that 75% of children, aged 5 to 18 years, participate in organized sport and physical recreation (ParticipACTION, 2015). Child friendly communities should have opportunities for structured classes (e.g., swimming classes) and organized sports (Fronczek, 2001). Particularly for organized sports, efforts should be made to reduce the economic barriers to the participation of children and youth (Fronczek, 2001). In a report by CIBC Kidsport (2014), 90% of parents commented that they felt organized sports fees were too expensive. The report also found that families in Alberta paid the most in Canada for their children’s participation in organized sports, a total of $1428.00 per child per year.

Research has shown that when parents report that their children have access to a recreation centre in their neighbourhood, they also report more days of children’s exercise (Cooper & Murphey, 2014). Recreation centres should have a variety of programming that meets the needs of children and youth of a range of ages (Fronczek, 2001). In a survey of Calgary families with young children, parents requested more indoor play spaces, for use during poor weather (Bateman, 2013). Also youth in the Calgary Vital Signs (2012) survey stated that additional recreation spaces for youth should be a community priority. Here are some questions that you can use to evaluate the child and youth friendliness of organized sport and physical recreation opportunities in your community.

7.10 Parks and Nature
Friendly communities should have access to natural elements (e.g., trees, water, fields) where children and youth can play (Fronczek, 2001). When children and youth have positive nature experiences it encourages their future connectedness to nature (ParticipACTION, 2015). Research shows that having green space and trees in communities helps to provide children, youth and families with a buffer to everyday stress (FCSS Calgary, 2014; Rugel, 2015). Additionally some studies have shown that children get a majority of their exercise through outdoor play in parks and playgrounds (Cooper & Murphey, 2014; ParticipACTION, 2015). For example, Schaefer et al. (2014) found that those children who spent most or all of their out of school time outdoors got 20 minutes more moderate to vigorous physical activity a day. Outdoor play also provides social, physical and cognitive development opportunities for children and youth, while lowering levels of obesity and increasing physical activity levels (Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009; ParticipACTION, 2015). Consistent with this a survey of parents in Calgary requested more safe outdoor spaces for children and youth (Bateman, 2013).

In addition to parks providing opportunities for outdoor play, they can also be used for outdoor events for children and youth (e.g., dances, music festivals) and can be tailored to youth interests (e.g., skate parks; Fronczek, 2001). Communities can also make community gardens available in parks where children and youth can plant, care for and pick their own flowers and vegetables (Fronczek, 2001). The following questions provide an opportunity for community members to examine the child and youth friendliness of their community’s parks and access to nature.

7.11 Play In Built Environments
As noted above, qualitative studies suggest that children get most of their exercise in parks and playgrounds (Cooper & Murphey, 2014). Playground equipment and structures need to be carefully designed and selected for children and youth. They should be built in areas that are accessible to children and youth by themselves in terms of proximity to their home (Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009). Playgrounds should have elements that are appropriate for children of a variety of ages, are physically challenging, and provide room for imagination (Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia, 2011). They should be built to ensure protection from traffic and animals, and provide places for caregivers to monitor their children when playing. Once built, efforts should be made to maintain playgrounds in
terms of their safety and cleanliness. To further evaluate the child and youth friendliness of your community’s play environments, use this evaluation tool.

7.12 Social and Family Support Services
Social and family support services should be located in the same area and as much as possibly work in cooperation with each other as community hubs (Howard, 2006). To check on the child and youth friendliness of social and family support services, have a look at these questions.

7.13 Transportation
In a Calgary survey of parents with young children most parents (80%) said that stores, parks and the libraries were accessible (Bateman, 2013). However, there was less support for the accessibility of child and health care facilities, social groups, and children’s programs and friends. Friendly communities should have opportunities for children, youth and families to access a variety of transportation options including active transportation.

Walking, biking, rollerblading and skateboarding should be supported as active transportation options by communities (Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009). Just 24% of children and youth in Canada only use active transportation to get daily to and from school (Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute, 2013). The most common transportation option used for children and youth in Alberta was by car (Canadian Fitness & Lifestyle Research Institute, 2013). There are several reasons why families may choose inactive versus active transportation options for their children and youth. These include how neighbourhoods are built, the availability of active transportation infrastructure, proximity to locations and perceptions of safety.

Facilitating the use of active transportation options involves creating communities where children and youth can travel easily and safely by active means (Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009). For example, creating lanes and trails that are separated from traffic and providing bike racks (Fronczek, 2001; Honey-Ray & Enns, 2009). Decision makers should protect active transportation routes by put in place traffic calming measures and lowering speed limits (ParticipACTION, 2015). Cross walks as well as and laws and signage should be used to slow traffic near children and youth areas.

There has also been a growing trend towards the promotion and development of healthy built environments that encourage and support healthy living. The term built environment refers to any human made surroundings where people live, work or play (Lees, Redman & Holy, 2014). Healthy built environments includes developing neighbourhoods that are walkable. A study from Saskatchewan examining neighbourhood characteristics and active transportation found that children living in neighbourhoods that were in a grid-pattern, as opposed to one with many cul-de-sacs, were most likely to use active transportation (Smart Cities, Healthy Kids, 2012). Lowered curbs or ramps are also helpful for children walking or riding their bikes, as well as for parents who are pushing strollers.

Additional initiatives like International Walk to School Day and walking school buses help to encourage active transportation options for children and youth. Walking school buses involve a group of rotating adults, including parents, meeting a group of children at set location(s) and walk to school from a neighbourhood. The idea was first introduced in Europe and is now gaining ground in North America.

Ultimately children and youth that participate in active transportation remain more active throughout their day as compared to those that get to school through inactive means. Active transportation children are also more physically fit, have lower body masses and benefit in terms of their mental health.
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(ParticipACTION, 2015). To evaluate the child and youth friendliness of your community’s transportation options, the following questions can be used.

7.14 Workplaces

One of the main ways that employers can ensure child and youth friendly communities is through the adoption of family friendly workplace practices. These workplaces have supportive policies, programs and practices for parents that make it easier for them to balance their work and family lives (Fronczek, 2001).

Unfortunately, 64% of parents in Calgary felt that their workplaces or schools were not family friendly (Bateman, 2013). For example, 46% felt that they were not able to take time off of work when their child was sick and 19% found it difficult to find affordable child care when their child was ill (Bateman, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Friendly Workplace Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family friendly practices can include:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- time off to care for family members during illness and emergencies;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- breast feeding spaces for mothers who return to work;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- leave policies (e.g., adoption, birth, bereavement);</td>
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<tr>
<td>- job sharing (where multiple employees share a single position, each working a portion of the time);</td>
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<tr>
<td>- working virtually (away from the worksite);</td>
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<tr>
<td>- employee and family health benefits;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- employee and family assistance programs;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- child and elder care;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- family oriented events (e.g., company picnic);</td>
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<tr>
<td>- and flexible work hours.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Workplace managers should receive training and tools to help implement family friendly practices, and should also lead by example. Governments can also encourage family friendly policies by mandating that businesses follow these policies and by providing subsidies and tax breaks to those who institute these policies.

The benefits of adopting family friendly workplace practices include reduced employee stress, improved employee health and productivity, and increased job satisfaction (Bateman, 2013; Conference Board of Canada, 2012). Adopting policies such as these make it possible for more people, especially women, to remain in the work force (Bateman, 2013). The extent workplaces are using family friendly practices can be evaluated using the following tool.
8.0 REFERENCES


