



Healthy Conditions for Growing Up

Children’s right to health, articulated in article 24 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*, adds value in Canada because it puts a spotlight on primary and preventive health care. Research on children’s health in Canada confirms the need for a stronger focus on the social determinants of health to balance the focus on clinical medicine in Canada. The official 5th/6th Report on implementation of the *CRC* does not adequately address this gap in health policy.

We know what to do to improve children’s health in Canada: we need a shift in policy and systems. For a summary of helpful research on what determines children’s health and the implications for Canadian policy, see [Social Determinants of Children’s Health](#).



Whole Child: Holistic Health

Poverty is a key child health indicator. Research shows that growing up in poverty affects a child’s risk of disease, growth, learning, and sense of well-being. It has lifelong consequences. The federal Poverty Reduction Strategy provides an opportunity to integrate income support, child care, housing, nutrition, community health services, and other social determinants of health for children. A robust, coordinated focus on children will lead to better outcomes.

Research also shows that giving children a voice in health care decisions that affect them has positive benefits. Canadian children are often excluded from health care decisions; requiring consideration of the views of the child in all areas of health care would lead to better outcomes.



Equitable Access

Canada’s report recognizes the existence of vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous children, refugee children, visible minorities, and children with disabilities, but it fails to provide data about their health. Analysis of the data is needed to address the major issues identified in existing research on the [Social Determinants of Children’s Health](#).

Published by the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children



Identified Areas of Action

Robust Focus on Children in Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy

Annual targets to reduce child poverty, multiple indicators to measure progress, and community-based, integrated solutions are necessary to ensure that children can realize the right to grow up in healthy living conditions.



Use Equity Analysis to Close Gaps in Access to Health Care

Annual reporting on access and outcomes for each vulnerable group should be used to inform policy and resource allocations to end the inequitable access to health care. In its 3rd/4th review in 2012, Canada was specifically asked to address inequitable access to health care; this needs to be done before the end of this review. Disaggregated data, analysis, and specific actions to remedy disparities are required for:

- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Children;
- Refugee Children;
- Visible Minorities; and
- Children with Disabilities.



Listen to Children and Community Voices

Children have the capacity and right to have their views considered in individual health care decisions and in health policy decisions. Community-run programs with active participation by children and families have better outcomes for children. Considering the views of children in all health care decisions should be mandatory.

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Share this with others and add your voice to support children's rights across Canada.

This Working Paper and Fact Sheet were developed with Prof. Donna Koller, PhD, and Ellie Murphy, RECE, Early Childhood Studies, Ryerson University. Available at www.rightsofchildren.ca.