

# Strategic Framework 2017-22

## Mission

The Canadian Paediatric Society is the national association of paediatricians, committed to working together to advance the health of children and youth by nurturing excellence in health care, advocacy, education, research and support of its membership.

## Who we are

As a voluntary professional association, the CPS represents more than 3,300 paediatricians, paediatric subspecialists, residents, and others who care for children and youth. We develop education and resources to help improve decision-making about child and youth health, and we advocate for public policy that ensures all children and youth have opportunities to thrive.



Canadian  
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# Why a strategic framework?

The Canadian Paediatric Society's **2017 – 2022 Strategic Framework** represents our view of what we can do to help make Canada the best place in the world to grow up. It builds on our history, reflects our strengths, and uses past success to focus our efforts.

This framework focuses our energy and efforts by defining where we want to go, and how we can best get there. Charting a new course requires the engagement of child and youth health providers and partners. We will draw from the expertise, experience and insight of paediatricians, researchers, advocates and leaders as we define what “success” looks like, and determine how best to achieve it. We will be fueled by the passion and commitment of our large community, and we will be actively seeking to grow.

Ensuring that every child and youth thrives in an environment that supports optimal health and well-being is the most important work we do—as paediatricians, as parents, as Canadians. It's also the most rewarding, though we are never quite “done”.

Like kids themselves, the potential for positive change is limitless. Each of us must focus on what unique contributions we can make, with a watchful eye on the political, economic and scientific changes that can either present opportunities or pose risks.

## How we got here

Behind this framework are the contributions of hundreds of people who care about child and youth health: CPS members and leaders, allied organizations, government officials, and leading experts who were consulted over an 18-month period. In June 2016, following a rigorous priority-setting process, the Board of Directors unanimously approved 5 priority areas:

- Early childhood development
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth
- Child and youth mental health
- Paediatric medications and therapeutics
- Social paediatrics

Through consultation, expert interviews, conversations, and debate, we explored each of these 5 priorities to determine the current landscape, the greatest needs, and what CPS can do to help meet those needs.

It became clear that at least one or more of these priorities touches the lives and practice of all Canadian paediatricians, and that progress will have a meaningful impact on the lives of children, youth and families.

The priorities are interconnected. For example, positive early childhood development supports mental health. Achieving health equity for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth means, in part, improving access to paediatric medications and therapeutics. Addressing social paediatrics calls us to eliminate disparities in early learning opportunities, mental health care, and life-saving and life-sustaining therapeutics. And so on.

Through this framework, together with our ongoing commitments, we will work with Canadian paediatricians, colleagues and others, to ensure every child and youth has the opportunity to grow and thrive.

## Guiding principles

These principles have helped shape our strategic framework, and will be reflected in our actions:

### Nurturing every child's promise

All children are born with potential. It's up to society to provide the opportunity for all children to achieve their potential. We will identify and pursue objectives that foster the health and development of every child and youth.

### Ensuring access to care

Children and youth need high quality health care at the right time and in the right place. We will work to eliminate barriers—financial or otherwise—to essential services and therapies.

### Achieving equity

A child's life circumstances should not hinder their ability to grow, learn, or develop. We will work to ensure equity for all children and youth, regardless of where they live or who they are.



## Strategic objectives

Between 2017 and 2022, the CPS will pursue 5 objectives critical to child and youth health:

- Nurture early childhood development
- Pursue health equity for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth
- Strengthen child and youth mental health and mental health care
- Expand access to safe and effective medications and therapeutics
- Advance the practice of social paediatrics



# Nurture

## Nurture early childhood development

Early experiences have a lasting and far-reaching impact on health, development, and later life. Investing in the first days, months, and years of life is not only in the best interests of children and their families, it is good for society. During the early years, children’s experiences can either nurture health and resiliency, or make them vulnerable to poor health and development. If children are supported with positive environments and social experiences, their future will look bright. But if they experience chronic stressors such as poverty, maternal depression, abuse or neglect, their development and health may be disrupted or undermined. Parents, caregivers and clinicians need access to the best possible tools and resources to enable healthy early childhood development.

To nurture early child development, the CPS will:

- Educate clinicians about key concepts in social and emotional development.
- Improve parent understanding of social and emotional development and what they can do to support it.
- Promote supportive relationships as fundamental to healthy child development.
- Promote the integration of the science of adverse childhood experiences into clinical practice.
- Promote an integrated system for early child development services and programs that is evidence-based and universally-available.



# Pursue

## Pursue health equity for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth

At the root of many of the health problems experienced by Indigenous children and youth in Canada is inequity. Systemic barriers to care, chronic underfunding, misaligned public policy, and the health system itself have all contributed to conditions that make it difficult for children and youth to thrive. In its 2015 report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission called on both the Canadian government and the health professional community to work to redress these long-standing wrongs. Achieving health equity for Indigenous children and youth requires improving access to health professionals, therapeutics and equipment. It means ensuring children and youth benefit from health promotion and preventative care. It means ensuring that health professionals who work with Indigenous families can provide culturally safe and competent care in a respectful way.

To pursue health equity for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and youth, the CPS will:

- Facilitate the routine use of clinically relevant guidelines to care for Indigenous children and youth, ensuring that these guidelines reflect the unique nature of providing health care in remote communities.
- Advocate for improvements to existing mechanisms for service coverage and delivery.
- Enhance health professional education on Indigenous child and youth health.
- Be an active participant in reconciliation with Indigenous communities.



# Strengthen

## Strengthen child and youth mental health and mental health care

Twenty per cent of Canadian children and youth will experience mental illness, and much of mental illness in adults begins in childhood and youth. Child and youth health professionals play a vital role in promoting their patients' mental health and providing appropriate and timely care when needed. Meeting the needs of children and youth requires an integrated approach, with a continuum of services and providers: community-based supports, acute care, an effective emergency services system, and residential treatment. Families should not face lengthy waits or financial barriers at any point on the continuum. As more is understood about the importance of mental health promotion and the effects of mental illness on young people, information and education for clinicians, caregivers, and policy-makers must keep pace.

To strengthen the mental health and mental health care of children and youth, the CPS will:

- Increase the competency of child and youth health providers to promote mental wellness and to prevent, diagnose and treat mental health disorders in children and youth.
- Advocate for expanded access to publicly funded treatment for children and youth, including psychology, school-based mental health and developmental services, and specialized inpatient and residential programs.
- Support families with children and youth struggling with mental health issues.
- Enhance the ability of health professionals to prevent and treat misuse of marijuana, alcohol and other substances.



# Expand

## Expand access to safe and effective medications and therapeutics

Access to safe, effective and affordable medications, therapies, and other needed medical equipment, is essential to achieve and maintain optimal child and youth health. However, Canada remains the only universal health care system in the developed world that does not include universal coverage of prescription medications, and the fragile patchwork of social programs and private insurance leaves many without crucial medical supplies. Moreover, Canada lags behind many industrialized countries in terms of mandating a drug and device regulatory system that safeguards paediatric patients and supports evidence-informed paediatric prescribing. Paediatricians are uniquely positioned to advise on, promote and ensure safe, effective and appropriate medication use, and they are key advocates in the fight to guarantee equal access to life-saving and life-sustaining therapies.

To advance equitable and evidence-based use of paediatric medications and therapeutics, the CPS will:

- Advocate for increased access to life-saving and life-sustaining medications, formulations, therapeutics, medical supplies and other essential health care services.
- Advocate for a federal drug and medical device regulatory framework that meets or exceeds international best practices.
- Guide and support appropriate “off-label” drug use for children and youth.
- Promote child health research, with a focus on paediatric medications, therapeutics and clinical trials.



# Advance

## Advance the practice of social paediatrics

Health starts where we live, learn, work and play, and all Canadians should have the opportunity to pursue a long and healthy life, regardless of their income, education or ethnic background. Evidence overwhelmingly indicates that social determinants, such as income, education, and family environment, have a profound impact on child and youth health outcomes. Recognizing the tremendous impact of social conditions on health, paediatricians have an important role to play in mitigating the negative economic, social, and physical environments of their patients. This is true for all children, youth and families, but especially for uniquely vulnerable groups. This role can and should be integrated into the daily practice of clinical care.

To advance the practice of social paediatrics, the CPS will:

- Enhance the ability of paediatricians to screen for and respond to risk factors associated with the social determinants of health.
- Advocate for appropriate medical care and continuity of care for children and youth in the child protection and foster care systems.
- Advocate for safe homes, schools and communities, with a focus on protecting children and youth from threats associated with addictive substances, firearms, and other dangerous products and environments.



## Accountability and action

The effort to support the optimal health and well-being of all children and youth is enduring. It has no end. However, with this document, we mark a new beginning.

Over the coming months, we will develop and share workplans, with specific actions, expected outcomes and measurable targets. As this framework evolves, we will communicate with members and partners about our short- and long-term initiatives, and will remain accountable through clear metrics.

Our aims are aspirational, and our framework is ambitious. We invite you to join us. Our collective voice will be louder, and our collective action will be more effective. The children and youth of Canada deserve that from us, and we pledge to deliver, for them and their future.



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