



Response to

National Children's Alliance
Discussion Paper for Third Party Monitoring
of the Early Childhood Development Initiative

A British Columbia Perspective

Prepared by

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Introduction

The National Children's Alliance has taken responsibility for developing a national framework for third party monitoring of the Early Childhood Development Initiative. Three provinces, British Columbia, Manitoba and Newfoundland were asked to review a draft framework and offer their regional perspective on the framework.

In British Columbia First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition agreed to coordinate the review of the draft framework provided by the National Children's Alliance. The draft framework was initially discussed by a sub group of First Call's Early Childhood Development Roundtable. This group developed a revised framework that reflected a regional perspective and this framework was brought forward to the Early childhood Development Roundtable.

This paper reflects the ideas, questions and concerns raised through these discussions. It also presents the preliminary thinking of this group regarding a framework for monitoring ECDI in British Columbia. It is expected that this work will contribute to the discussion at the National Children's Alliance meeting in March 2002.

What is Being Monitored?

1. Observation of Children's Alliance Discussion Paper:

- Discussion Paper uses a "basket" of services approach to both describe the programs and services implemented at any given time and those programs which are considered important but which may not be implemented.

Comments from First Call:

- Need to focus on issues of provincial government accountability and transparency regarding use of ECDI funds.
- The Ministry for Children and Family Development has put the ECDI in the overall context of its "Early Childhood Development Strategy". This may make it very difficult to monitor what is in the basket before and after ECDI.
- There is an emerging recognition by First Call members that funds from ECD are likely to be used to replace program funding previously provided by the province. The government may close some of its programs and start others with ECDI funds. The net result is likely to be little, if any, gain. Therefore, in the context of the Discussion Paper circulated by the NCA at this time, we wonder if there will in fact be any "improvements and expansions to monitor.
- The Government of British Columbia has not yet released its baseline report for ECDI. What accountability and monitoring criteria are in place from the federal government regarding such reporting?

2. Observation of Children’s Alliance Discussion Paper:

- Discussion Paper focuses on monitoring child outcomes.

Comments from First Call:

- The framework used in British Columbia must focus on monitoring where and how the ECDI funds are being spent in the province.
- There is little likelihood that individual ECDI programs will have a causal relationship with the population based outcome indicators listed.
- We need only a few specific outcome measures relating to the whole basket of ECD programs. Our group suggested two indicators: Early Development Instrument (EDI) and birth weight. In addition, we recommend further development of indicators related to social supports.

3. Observation of Children’s Alliance Discussion Paper:

- The section “Monitoring Improvement and Enhancement” addresses several program implementation questions such as access to and effectiveness of programs and services.

Comments from First Call:

- These questions are typically addressed through program evaluation processes. Thus far, there are no identified resources or processes to engage in program evaluation for the broad spectrum of ECDI programs.
- The reporting and evaluation requirements of ECDI programs are not known. There is a need for greater understanding of both federal and provincial government intentions regarding monitoring and evaluating these programs and services.

Who is Monitoring?

Observation of Children’s Alliance Discussion Paper:

- The Discussion Paper does not clearly articulate who is charged with the mandate to monitor government activity related to ECDI.

Observation from First Call:

- There is currently no group with the mandate or resources to monitor federal or provincial government activities in ECDI.
- Need to be very cautious about undertaking community based monitoring when the community has no (or at least very limited) capacity to undertake this work.
- Data related to suggested indicators is currently being monitored by several data bases including NLSCY and the Provincial health system. Several BC ministries are currently involved in an inter-ministerial table to identify both child outcomes and effective data collection strategies. We do not know how ECDI monitoring would interface with current data collection.

What Timeframe is Being Monitored?

Observation of Alliance Discussion Paper:

- No timeframe for monitoring is suggested in the Discussion Paper.

Comments from First Call:

- It is important that the timeframe be determined.

Suggested Framework for British Columbia Third Part Monitoring of ECDI

Part 1: Determining the ECD Baseline

What Do Children and Families Need?	Areas of Government Responsibility (Best Basket)	Programs in BC that Address this Child and Family Need (Basket Before ECDI)	Child and Family Outcomes

Part 2: ECDI Monitoring

ECDI Improvements and Expansions (ECDI Basket)	Evidence of Research Based Program Foundation	Program Accessibility/ Eligibility

Part 3: ECD Outcomes

Current ECD Basket including the ECDI Basket	Child and Family Outcomes

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