

THIRD PARTY MONITORING OF THE
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
INITIATIVE

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THIRD PARTY MONITORING OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

PART I

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Children's Alliance is a network of more than 30 national organizations committed to improving the lives of children and youth in Canada. Since its inception in 1996 the Alliance has worked to:

- Facilitate dialogue on children's issues with government
- Strengthen the network of national voluntary organizations and NGOs
- Develop policy recommendations;
- Engage provincial/territorial/regional constituent organizations in working collaboratively on issues, and
- Promote the development and implementation of a national children's agenda

In February 1999, the federal, provincial and territorial governments (excluding Quebec) signed the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) committing to a coordinated approach to social policy. The National Children's Agenda (NCA), launched in May 1999, was the first inter-governmental initiative under SUFA. It aims to establish a coordinated policy framework to address the needs of children and youth. The Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI), announced in the September 2001 Speech from the Throne, was the first policy initiative under the NCA. It committed new federal funding of \$2.2 billion over five years to be invested by provinces and territories in programs and services for children aged 0 to 6 and their families.

1.1 National Children's Alliance Goals

For many years now, the National Children's Alliance has argued for the establishment of third party monitoring of child and family well-being in Canada. Most recently in the National Children's Alliance's brief to the Standing Committee on Finance in 2001, it advocated for a long-term plan with targets, benchmarks and measurable outcomes for improving conditions for children and families. It cautioned against one-shot solutions such as limited-year funding for new social service initiatives that are unlikely to result in sustained improvement in child and youth outcomes. The Alliance continues to believe that monitoring – on the part of governments and third parties – is critical to the success of children's policy in Canada.

As such, the Alliance has strategic interests in working with communities, governments and the voluntary sector to build the general case for third party

social policy monitoring, and specifically, to establish a credible and effective monitoring framework for children programs and related government initiatives.

SUFA requires governments to monitor, measure and publicly report on social policy outcomes and to involve third parties in assessing progress. Thus, it is up to the voluntary and community sector to ensure that third party monitoring is an influential force in Canada, holding governments accountable to their commitments to children and ensuring appropriate actions towards improved child outcomes. It is up to the Alliance members to work together to identify common issues for action and advocacy in the area of early child development, to communicate to our constituents common messages in solidarity and to put pressure on the government to collect and make information on important issues accessible to all.

1.2 Project Goals

The National Children's Alliance is committed to undertaking quality research in order to participate effectively in the development of a monitoring framework for the ECDI that ensures its accountability, efficacy, and transparency. To this end, the Alliance has commissioned a discussion paper and is hosting a national workshop to look at the issues involved in monitoring progress on early childhood development and new programs undertaken under the auspices of the ECDI.

By drawing together children's advocacy and service groups from across Canada to explore approaches to monitoring the ECDI, the National Children's Alliance hopes:

- to develop a better understanding of monitoring and the difficulties inherent in linking indicators with public policies;
- to clarify issues around the ECDI and its positioning vis-à-vis the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA);
- to facilitate a dialogue nationally and regionally among various sectors of the children's community about healthy child development, effective policies and programs, and the need for monitoring;
- to bring a local/regional perspective to bear on ECDI monitoring;
- to create an inclusive policy and program development process; and
- to assist communities in designing community-based monitoring initiatives.

The primary goal of the discussion paper is to generate discussion on how best to monitor the ECDI from the perspective of non-governmental, voluntary organizations serving and advocating on behalf of Canadian children and their families. What the authors have not done is to develop a single model for monitoring. Rather, we have drafted the paper with the intention of raising questions about what must be considered in developing an approach – or approaches – for monitoring children's programs and initiatives. These are questions about the appropriate use of indicators, about the link between

research and public policy, and about the difficulties and tensions involved in attempting to monitor children's policy and programs across political jurisdictions. Asking questions must be the first step in developing a process for third party monitoring – indeed any monitoring initiative – that focuses attention on the challenges facing Canadian children and opportunities that exist to enhance child well-being.

As stated above, the draft paper will be discussed at a national symposium for national and provincial members of the National Children's Alliance in March 2002. Based on the discussions at the workshop, a final paper and related advocacy materials will be developed to support the efforts of Alliance members and others committed to expanding and enhancing early childhood development programs across Canada. We hope that together, the ECDI monitoring paper and workshop will move forward third party monitoring of the Early Childhood Development Initiative (should we open the door here for other possible results – such as placing the responsibility of monitoring more fully in the hands of government and advocating for reporting?) No, because the NCA is on the record in support of third party monitoring. It would seem to be something of an about face to then suggest only governments should monitor. We need to take this up in an after word.

1.3 Outline for the Discussion Paper

The Discussion Paper will:

- Set out the context of the current discussion around monitoring from national and provincial/territorial perspectives;
- Review a selected number of models on monitoring, taking into account limitations of existing data sources, etc.;
- Present various options or approaches for developing a shared framework to enhance and/or expand supports and to monitor child outcomes (as stated in the ECDI agreement); and
- Propose a process for monitoring the ECDI, taking national/provincial/territorial perspectives into account.

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Background of the National Children's Agenda and the Early Childhood Development Initiative

The set of assumptions that underpin the proposed third party monitoring framework for the ECDI has been drawn from:

- the *National Children's Agenda* (NCA) and the *Early Childhood Development Initiative* (ECDI)
- the current policy framework in Canada
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other human rights instruments
- the literature about child development and health and well-being

Vision of the National Children's Agenda

The *National Children's Agenda* lays out a vision for the children of Canada:

We want all of our children to be loved and to thrive.

We want every child to be valued and to develop his or her unique physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and creative capacities.

We want every child to be respected and protected, and in turn, to respect and protect the rights of others.

We want all of our children to belong and contribute to communities that appreciate diversity, support different abilities and share their resources.

Goals of the National Children's Agenda

To fulfil this vision, the *National Children's Agenda* and the *Early Childhood Development Initiative* articulated a set of four goals. Thus, early childhood development would be promoted to ensure that the children of Canada are:

Healthy – Physically and Emotionally

Children who are as physically and emotionally healthy as they can be, with strong self-esteem, life skills and enthusiasm. Children who are physically and mentally active, live healthy lifestyles, are free of preventable disease and injury, and enjoy healthy environments.

Safe and Secure

Children whose basic needs are met, including love, shelter, food, clothing, recreation and play. Children who are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and dangerous environments, and who are given support by caring adults.

Successful at Learning

Children who achieve physical, emotional and social development, language skills, literacy, numeracy and general knowledge to the best of their capabilities. Children who are ready for learning throughout their lives so they can gain the abilities they need for present and future fulfillment.

Socially-Engaged and Responsible

Children who can form stable attachments to nurturing adults when they are young and develop supportive relationships within and outside their families. Children who value Canada's cultural heritage and diversity, and who develop an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of belonging to a wider society. Children who respect themselves and others through being respected, and understand the personal and social consequences of their choices.

Principles of the Early Childhood Development Initiative

As stated, the ECDI committed \$2.2 billion over five years to meet these goals for children aged 0 to 6. A set of principles to ensure the healthy development of children was laid out in the *Early Childhood Development Initiative* (First Ministers' Meeting, 2000) and was to guide investments so that they would be:

- Focused on prevention and early intervention;
- Intersectoral;
- Integrated;
- Supportive of the child within the family and community context; and
- Inclusive of children with different abilities and living in different economic, cultural, linguistic and regional circumstances.

The *National Children's Agenda* and the *Early Childhood Development Initiative* committed to the development of a public monitoring framework to hold investments accountable for delivering on their goals and objectives. Under the *Early Childhood Development Agreement*, First Ministers committed to being accountable to the public for investments in early childhood development. Specifically, they agreed to report on investments and their progress in enhancing programs and services in the four goal areas and on outcome indicators of child well-being (First Ministers' Meeting, 2000).

2.2 The ECDI and SUFA

This paper is intended to assist communities across Canada to design a framework for public monitoring and accountability for investments under the ECDI, in keeping with commitments made under SUFA.

The accountability provisions of the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) commit federal and provincial governments to increase

transparency and accountability to Canadians. This means that governments will work to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms for Canadians to participate in identifying social priorities and reviewing outcomes, to register complaints and to apply for appeals to decisions. Governments have also committed to make the eligibility criteria and service commitments of their social programs publicly available. In all, the SUFA commitments require governments to monitor, measure and publicly report on social policy outcomes, share best practices, use third-party help to assess progress, and explain their respective roles and contributions regarding social initiatives. In this way, Canadians can accurately assess the performance of their social programs (Results Management and Reporting Planning, Performance and Reporting Sector, 2000).

While SUFA puts responsibility on governments to be accountable for tracking the performance of social programs, the reality in Canada is that jurisdictions avoid having to compare their programs, services and outcomes to those in other jurisdictions. The argument is that the situations are not comparable, so it would be unfair to hold one up against the other. In fact, different jurisdictions do use different definitions and concepts and have different age cut offs and other eligibility criteria for programs and services. This has led to a very hazy understanding across the country about many social phenomena and to gaps in information on which a national picture could emerge.

Issues of transparency

As well, there is a large variation across the country in the degree of transparency by governments. In some provinces it is unclear if money invested by the federal government in the ECDI is being used to add to, expand and improve existing early childhood development programs and services or to replace ECD programs that were cut to bolster general revenues.

Need for third-party monitoring

It is clear that those closest to the ground in communities have the best vantage point for assessing performance and for providing feedback to governments on whether investments are meeting stated goals and objectives within specific communities or regions across the country. Gathering this information locally and regionally will help to create a national picture that is sensitive to and reflective of regional variations and differences. It can be used to contextualise national level indicators, providing a more robust picture of the well-being of young children across the country and identifying areas where investments are working or where they need to be enhanced. Third party monitoring of the ECDI should lead to more open dialogue among the stakeholders in the early child development community, to more informed local, regional and national governments, to more

responsive programs and services, to more fully engaged citizens, and to healthier outcomes for young children and their families.

2.3 The Limits of Monitoring

At the onset, the authors – all of whom are involved in monitoring initiatives – would like to raise a caveat about the process of monitoring. There is a danger in the activity around the ECDI, the National Children’s Agenda and SUFA that too much will be made out of monitoring. This might well be easier to say if there was evidence that governments were in fact monitoring social policy initiatives undertaken since the elimination of the Canada Assistance Plan. Even in those areas where the federal government in cooperation with the provinces and territories is building an information architecture to monitor programs and services such as in health, it is arguable that the information being collected really affords citizens the knowledge to hold governments accountable for actions taken on their behalf.

The basic idea behind monitoring is that by generating and tracking detailed information on a particular subject governments (1) will be better informed as they design and implement policy and programs; and (2) will be held to account for the expenditure of public dollars. Citizens empowered by knowledge about various program options will be able to pressure governments and/or service providers to meet their needs – or in a market system – transfer their dollars and support elsewhere.

Monitoring can also serve to promote social values and raise awareness about various public issues. It can be a powerful tool in the service of the public as pressure is brought to bear on governments to meet the needs of its citizens. When independent monitoring is successful, the tables are in effect turned on governments, as the monitored – in this instance children and families – become the monitor.

However, there are arguments against putting all of your eggs into a “public monitoring basket”. The new social policy regime enshrined in the Social Union Framework Agreement, for instance, holds up “monitoring” in place of old-style intergovernmental arrangements that attached conditions to the transfer of dollars between governments. These relationships, to be sure, were designed to hold governments accountable to each other, and only indirectly, to citizens. But the framework of principles and conditions that were embodied in the *Canada Assistance Plan* – and still characterize the *Canada Health Act* – did in fact permit an accounting of provincial programs and services if not the creation of truly national programs. The current intergovernmental framework that is based on good will alone presupposes that governments will generate the data necessary and publicly report to diverse publics for program and policy choices. The fact that only two governments to date – the federal government and Manitoba – have published a baseline report on children’s programs as required

by the ECDI illustrates the glaring failings of this variant of “cooperative federalism.”

In the best case scenario, where governments did generate meaningful data on programs and their outcomes, where third parties were resourced and actively engaged in the monitoring process, would the publication of annual reports actually result in better public policy? Public policy making is a political process, a highly complex and often obscure exercise that is influenced by a host of factors – not least of which is public input and solid scientific evidence. To suggest that monitoring should drive public policy reduces and obscures this complexity, and as importantly, vests power over the public policy process in the hands of a technical elite – those that understand Z scores and regression equations.

Public monitoring will never take the place of political action to pursue the interests of children and families. Establishing monitoring processes at the community level can be an excellent vehicle to develop and mobilize community interests, but one shouldn't lose sight of the broader picture. At worst, monitoring initiatives can draw community energy and resources away from more effective strategies of intervention. Community groups are drawn into partnerships with the government that can challenge their autonomy and erode their credibility with their stakeholders. It is a very fine balance to transverse, one that we need to consider in pursuing third party monitoring of the ECDI.

3. INDICATORS

Indicators are the building block of any monitoring framework that seeks to measure, assess and report on social policy and its outcomes. Borrowing from the SUFA Accountability Template Guide, we define an **indicator** is a specific quantitative and/or qualitative measurement for each aspect of performance under consideration. **Comparable indicators** are a specific set of common quantitative and/or qualitative measurements for each aspect of performance under consideration. They are based on common baseline information, definitions and database collection, and a compatible reporting system. **Societal indicators** are indicators of social performance that track broad trends in society. They do not seek to estimate the direct impact of government initiatives; rather they describe and track, over time, such factors as well-being and health.

A key criterion in selecting indicators is validity – indicators that best approximate the phenomenon under study. Other selection criteria include the following:

- Indicators should be meaningful, describing prevailing social conditions that can be remedied by public policy.
- They should be unambiguous and relatively easy to interpret.
- They should be clearly relevant to policy makers, service providers and stakeholders
- Indicators should be timely, available at regular intervals, and sensitive to change. They should be able to assess whether an improvement or deterioration has taken place with respect to a given concern.
- Indicators should reveal the special circumstances of different population groupings (e.g. women and men, youth, Aboriginal persons, etc).
- Indicators should be available at different geographic levels of disaggregation (e.g. urban/rural, province, region, etc.) in order to be relevant to policy-makers.
- The number of indicators should be comprehensive but limited to prevent information overload and to facilitate data management and the comparison of results. Too few indicators would be inadequate to give a broad and reasonably full view of the concern being measured, whereas too many would be unwieldy and difficult to interpret.
- The selected indicators should reflect key aspects of the issue, such as prevalence, populations at risk, and availability of supports for victims (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1997; McCracken and Scott, 1998; Dechman and Neuman, 1998).

Indicators also have a number of limitations that we need to acknowledge (see FPT Ministries Responsible for the Status of Women and Statistics Canada, 2000):

- They are limited by the data that can be or has been collected and measured. Problems with how concepts are defined, how data are reported or by whom, and a variety of other factors can lead to an under or over count in the prevalence of a variety of phenomenon.
- They identify problems and areas that need further investigation but may not paint a picture in sufficient detail for policy development.
- Comparability of data across jurisdictions may be difficult depending on the approach used to define and collect the information
- They point to trends, but in isolation cannot be used to establish causal relationships
- They can point to very different outcomes, depending on how the data are interpreted. For example, an increase in the use of a specific service may be counted as a positive indicator when in fact it could be an indicator of the deterioration of an aspect of health within a community.
- They may provide an incomplete or distorted picture if there are gaps in the data from which they are drawn
- They must be interpreted and situated within the context of a wide range of policies and programs, including legal frameworks, services and programs, training programs, public education and awareness programs, and government spending.
- They are not value free. They are based on a set of assumptions that stem from definitions or understandings about persons, communities, development, health and well-being, etc.

Thus, indicators must be carefully selected to ensure that they are measuring what they were intended to measure. This is what is commonly referred to as ‘an attribution problem’ (Whose problem is the attribution problem – voluntary sector’s or governments’? The group seemed to feel it was up to government to show that they were impacting on child health, not up to the third party monitors. Government responsible for the program theory. Do we want to introduce this issue? – I think that we can raise this in the after word). Using social indicators to monitor government investments requires expertise and a thorough understanding of the challenges and potential pitfalls.

3.1 The Challenges in Using Social Indicators in Public Accountability

What should a third party monitoring framework for monitoring early childhood development and the ECDI do? Brown and Corbett (1997) outlined five different uses of social indicators and described the difficulties pursuant to each. The examples based on the issue of low birth weight have been added in this paper for illustrative purposes.

- Description. Most social indicators are simple, descriptive statistical statements (e.g. the rate of low birth weight). Description is the most straightforward use of social indicators, providing knowledge about society.

- Monitoring. Monitoring entails tracking descriptive indicators to determine where social action is required (e.g. the trend in low birth weight rates). This is generally a straightforward and effective use of social indicators.
- Setting Goals. Setting goals involves monitoring in the context of active policies intended to improve health and well-being (e.g. aiming to reduce low birth weight by a specified percent). Social indicators can be an effective basis for setting goals. To be effective, it is advisable to set a time frame for achieving these goals. Good social indicators are precise, well articulated and measurable.
- Outcomes-based Accountability. This is the use of social indicators to hold agencies and governments responsible for improving health and well-being and achieving their stated goals (e.g. has the rate of low birth weight declined by the specified amount in the specified time?). Using social indicators to assess accountability requires caution and sophistication.
- Evaluation. Evaluation entails demonstrating a relationship between activities and outcomes (e.g. program “A” produced outcome “B”). Using social indicators for evaluation is not recommended.

Using this language, the goals of a third party monitor of the ECDI could be: (a) to describe and monitor determinants and outcomes relating to early childhood development, (b) to advocate for the setting of appropriate goals at the government level and (c) to hold governments accountable for improving the outcomes. Each of these goals is more difficult than the last. Specifically, holding government initiatives, like the ECDI, accountable for improving outcomes is a difficult process because so many factors, predictable and unpredictable can contribute to that outcome. The group asked if our goal was to monitor the ECDI or to monitor child outcomes. If the former, the focus could be on government expenditure and services. Focus on government performance – I think we keep the focus on third party monitors / not NCA monitoring.

Ideally, social indicators would be able to demonstrate the effects of specific programs and policies over time on outcomes. However, constructing these kinds of social indicators would be a major research project in and of itself. Further, it would likely require the development of administrative databases that are comparable across jurisdictions and time. Administrative databases have the advantage of relating directly to programs and policies. In the absence of these kinds of databases, outcomes-based accountability must focus on the apparent achievement of stated goals.

Evaluation is outside the scope of third party monitoring, although it is clearly an invaluable activity. The issue of attribution (attributing a change to a particular service or program or factor) cannot be tackled through a framework of social indicators. Brett and Corbett (1997) indicate that it may be tempting to substitute social indicators for rigorous experimental studies but that this is ultimately facile and misleading. Instead, evaluation must be promoted as an essential and complementary process engaged in by a well funded body of social researchers.

According to the Final Report of the Joint Working Group of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Statistics Canada on the Advancement of Research Using Social Statistics (December 1998), Canada has “very little capacity to conduct social policy research, evaluate social policy programs or monitor progress towards achieving social aims.” They argue that Canada lacks trained researchers working in government and that there is inadequate access to national survey data for researchers working outside of government. They also point out that knowledge translation (the exchange of information between those who produce knowledge and those who use the knowledge) is in its infancy. Clearly, changes will need to be made before governments will be able to conduct and support the kind of research necessary to developing a strong program evaluation process.

3.2 Difficulties Monitoring the ECDI Specifically

What are the conceptual challenges in monitoring the ECDI? The first challenge is agreeing on a vision and articulating its underlying assumptions. A second challenge is developing a framework that captures what the vision entails and enables its achievement to be monitored from a third party perspective. A third challenge is developing a set of indicators, using available data sources. A fourth challenge is building on current data sources to increase their capacity. What we cannot do continues to far outstrip what we can do in terms of monitoring early childhood development and the ECDI. However, there is a solid groundwork upon which to build.

Fortunately, in this case, there is a vision already articulated – the vision set forth by the NCA and the ECDI. However, developing a framework for third party monitoring based on this vision is another challenge. This section of the paper describes the limitations of a commonly used ecological model. It paves the way for a discussion of the adaptations to the model that would enhance its utility in monitoring the ECDI.

The basic ecological model looks at (a) determinants of child health and (b) child health outcomes. This is best conceptualized not as a straightforward linear model but as a circular model with many crisscrossing points. For example, an outcome of one determinant may be a determinant of another outcome. Many governmental and non-governmental organizations use variants on this ecological model for monitoring child well-being. A number of these models are presented in this paper (see section 4). They are used predominantly to describe the status of children, to situate them in a particular socioeconomic context and to monitor trends. The basic ecological model articulated by the National Children’s Agenda is organized around three sets of influences (family, community and society) and four broad child outcomes (healthy, safe and secure, successful at learning and socially engaged/responsible).

The basic ecological models can describe aspects of the health and well-being of young children and their social and physical environments. From the point of view of third party monitoring of the ECDI, the most important limitation of this model is that it cannot assess the impact of specific policies and programs on them or determine whether related programs have been improved and enhanced. As many personal, family, community and public policy factors contribute to the health of a person, it would be difficult to attribute improvements in a social indicator of health simply to one government initiative. Keeping in mind that attribution is a dangerous and difficult process, better left in the field of experimental research, some approach must still be put in place to monitor program improvement and enhancement.

Adapting the ecological model to meet the current needs of third party monitoring

How do you come up with a set of indicators that are inclusive, respect the rights of children and can be used to monitor the ECDI? As indicated in *Toward an Inclusive Approach to Monitoring Investments and Outcomes in Child Development and Learning* (Roehrer, 2002), no indicator is value free – they are always based on assumptions. As such it is important that these assumptions are grounded in research on child development. In this report, the Roehrer Institute describes norm-referenced, criterion referenced and self-anchored indicators.

- Norm-referenced indicators: measure a child's performance against a norm that has been established through testing a representative sample. Comparing children with disabilities against a norm may mark them as deficient and abnormal. Danger that this will reproduce cultural stereotypes of disability. Appropriate for determining delays or discrepancies – suitable for determining eligibility for supports and services.
- Criterion-referenced assessments are used to determine a child's strengths and weaknesses using a predetermined set of skills that are assumed to be important. Same concerns as above. Appropriate for assessing child's skills – development of individualized education plans.
- Self-anchored assessments: designed to measure children's progress along their own unique developmental paths, the quality of their relationships with others and how they are affected by influences. Suitable for assessing, guiding and adapting interventions and for evaluating the success of interventions.

Using self-anchored indicators to the extent possible, then, is one solution that can be implemented immediately in order to increase the inclusiveness of the framework.

According to Ben-Arieh et al (2001), another approach to ensuring that children are recognized as the legitimate holders of rights, valued for who they are now, is to develop more and better "positive indicators". They convincingly argue that

the absence of a negative indicator does not indicate the presence of a positive one. For example, it is not enough to know how many preschool children do not have behavioural problems. We need to know how many children are developing pro-social skills. The UN Convention of the Rights of Children would be an excellent place to begin when envisioning positive indicators. Using positive indicators to the extent possible would be an immediate solution to the challenge of incorporating a children's rights perspective into the monitoring framework.

In terms of monitoring the ECDI, which involves tracking improvements and enhancements to early childhood development programs, another approach would be to expand the ecological model to include a "basket of supports". In this approach, the essential programs that benefit children are selected and put in the "basket" and the question is asked, are these programs being improved and expanded? This may sound simple but it is a surprisingly difficult task. Very few programs have been evaluated, even fewer have been evaluated using adequately designed and implemented methodologies – in fact, most early childhood programs have not been evaluated at all (Peters, 1999). Where there is a solid research base, evidence of program effects on child health and behaviour are extremely limited, although there is some evidence for short term improvements in cognitive functioning (Peters, 1999). Thus, filling the basket involves common sense (sometimes useful and sometimes misleading) and a careful consideration of the desired determinants and outcomes.

These approaches to selecting indicators and building a monitoring framework are important considerations in adapting the ecological model of child development for the purposes of monitoring the ECDI. These issues are discussed in greater detail in Section 6.

3.3 Data Limitations

What are the data-related challenges in developing and implementing a framework for third party monitoring of the ECDI? There are three major challenges. First, it is difficult to effectively monitor the health and well-being of children without a seamless and comprehensive set of indicators. There are currently many gaps in the data available to support indicators. Some major gaps include, but are by no means limited to:

- Young children's access to and use of health and social services and supports (including mental health services)

- The mental health of young children
- Young children' access to and use of recreation
- The health, well-being and participation of young children with disabilities
- The nutritional status of young children
- Young children's exposures to environmental toxicants
- Data at the disaggregated at the local level

Some of these gaps will be reduced following the release of data from the children's Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). However, other gaps may require changes in the ways that data is managed and the development of other data sources, such as administrative databases. There is clearly a role for the federal government in ensuring that the development of new sources of data occurs in such a way that the data is high quality, comparable across jurisdictions and time and accessible to researchers in and out of government.

Advocacy, to ensure that important surveys receive stable, on-going funding is an important role for the National Children's Alliance. For example, without advocacy work by the Canadian Institute of Child Health and others, there would not have been a children's PALS. Advocacy is also sometimes necessary to keep crucial questions on or add new content to surveys, like the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) and the National Population Health Survey (NPHS). Advocacy is also essential to motivate and direct the development of new data sources.

The second challenge is to ensure that the data collected supports indicators that are inclusive and consistent with a children's rights perspective. The Roeher Institute suggests the use of self-anchored indicators as the foundation to a more inclusive approach. While many existing national surveys collect normative data, they also collect data that could be used to support a system of self-anchored indicators. The NLSCY, NPHS and PALS all use some self-anchored indicators (Roeher, 2002). Further, the Roeher point out that data exist on the availability and accessibility of programs and opportunities; community inclusion indicators on membership and valued participation are very limited. (Roeher, 2002)

A third challenge relates to access to data (see the *Joint Working Group of SSHRC and Statistics Canada, 1998* for a more complete discussion). Aside from obvious barriers to access, such as cost, there are other problems that must be recognized and resolved. Because descriptive data from cross-sectional surveys are inadequate for monitoring changes in outcomes or understanding the causal mechanisms that led to outcomes, longitudinal surveys are essential. Longitudinal surveys, such as the NLSCY and the NPHS, are very complex. Using them requires expertise in statistics and statistical programs. This in itself can be a barrier for third party monitoring for some groups. The complexity of the surveys means more information must be suppressed to protect privacy. When information is suppressed it creates problems for researchers. It is already not

feasible to create public use micro-data files for some of the new longitudinal surveys. It becomes more difficult to develop a micro-data file that protects confidentiality when longitudinal data are collected over a number of years (Joint Working Group of SSHRC and Statistics Canada, 1998). Members of the Alliance must be aware of this trend in access and identify what their information requirements will be in the future and how they will meet them.

3.4 About the Surveys and Other Data Sources

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY)

- Developed by Statistics Canada and Human Resources Development Canada
- Collects information on over 20,000 children
- Started in 1994, the NLSCY will survey these children every two years until they reach adulthood
- Includes a broad range of family, household and community characteristics affecting child development
- Data collected from primary caregiver, teacher and older children

This is a powerful tool for gathering longitudinal information on healthy childhood development. It provides the basis for research investigating the relationships between specific influences and outcomes. It offers the opportunity to look at longitudinal indicators (e.g. time spent in a lone parent family) in relation to outcomes. The NLSCY is most useful as a basis for research, but it supports monitoring at the national level to some extent. It is difficult to disaggregate much of the data at provincial levels and impossible at the community level. Aboriginal children on reserve are excluded. This survey includes many norm-referenced measures, but also has some self-anchored indicators. The NLSCY is not a useful source of information on the need for or the use of health and social services and supports nor is it a good source of information on children with disabilities and their families.

The National Population Health Survey (NPHS)

- Conducted by Statistics Canada, collects information relating to the health of the population of Canada
- A cross-section of information is obtained by surveying all members (12 and older) of the survey households (58,000 individuals). To collect longitudinal information, one respondent per household, aged 12 years and older, is surveyed (18,000 individuals). Data will be collected every two years, starting in 1994.

The NPHS is a good tool for gathering cross-sectional and longitudinal data on the health of the population. Not specifically child-focused, it nonetheless asks questions about the health of all family members. It is a valuable source of information for health research. Some questions lend themselves to monitoring purposes. Once you are looking at a restricted age group, it is often not possible

to disaggregate the data beyond the national level because of the sample size. The NPHS is better than the NLSCY for disability data, but is still not a disability survey. (HALS and now PALS will fill the disability information gap.) Aboriginal people on reserves are excluded.

The Census

- Conducted by Statistics Canada.
- It provides national coverage of the entire Canadian population, including variables on demographic, social, cultural, labour force and income data, as well as details on dwellings, households and families.
- Generally, data are presented for Canada, the provinces, the territories and Census Metropolitan Areas.

The sense is an invaluable source for demographic information. It can be disaggregated at various levels.

The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)

- Conducted by Statistics Canada
- Will provide regular cross-sectional estimates of health determinants, health status and health system utilization for 136 health regions across the country
- Funded under the Health Information Roadmap initiative
- Each two-year collection cycle will be composed of two distinct surveys – a health region-level survey and a provincial-level survey
- Principal exclusions – populations on Indian Reserves, Canadian Forces Bases and some remote areas
- Planned over-sampling of youth, over 12
- Will develop focus content topics such as mental health, nutrition, physical measures
- Will respond to provincial needs to support regional health authorities

The CCHC may fill the gap on certain topics that have not been well covered by other surveys, including mental health, nutrition and physical measures. Data will be available at a sub-provincial level – much more useful to communities and health regions.

The Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS)

- Developed by HRDC and Statistics Canada
- Will collect information on: rates of disability; types of disability; severity; access and barriers to full participation in the home, school etc
- Two components: an adult questionnaire and a child and youth one

The first national childhood disability survey since 1991, PALS will respond to the need for comprehensive current information. The new survey includes a stronger focus on the daily lives of the children and their families. It will be limited in its contribution if it remains a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal survey.

Administrative Data Bases

- Provinces and territories (who have jurisdictional responsibility for education and social services) collect administrative data about early childhood development programs and about other services utilized by young children and their families. Examples of early childhood development programs with potentially useful administrative data include Aboriginal Head Start and Community Action Programs for Children (CAP-C). There are other administrative data sources, such as the Annual Reports of the Employment Insurance Commission, which provides information on those receiving maternity and/or parental benefits) (Friendly, Cleveland and Lero, forthcoming)
- Administrative data generally describe service utilization, the consumption of resources, the capacity to supply services and the extent to which services encompass best practices. These data are potentially ideal in terms of public accountability because of the direct link with services.

Often administrative data are the only data available on services, service utilization and, sometimes, related child outcomes. Because these data are not collected as part of a survey or experimental research, the quality of the data can be problematic for monitoring purposes.

Vital Statistics

- Birth, death, stillbirth, marriages, divorces

An excellent source of data on these specific topics, this is an example of a very useful administrative data set.

Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)

- CIHI is an independent, not-for-profit organization, founded in 1994, with extensive data holdings on the health care system
- CIHI maintains health expenditures, health professional and health services databases

CIHI contributes information on health services utilization, including children's hospitalization rates and the causes of hospitalization. The utility of this data has been limited by a number of factors. Differences in health care delivery in different regions (e.g., some regions may rely more on hospitalization) may give a false impression of higher rates of certain health problems. Repeat users of the health care system have made it more difficult to assess if the rates indicate a few children using the health care system often or many children using the health care system infrequently.

4. EXEMPLARY MODELS

The explosion of interest in social indicators and children is evident in the large number of monitoring initiatives that exist at the community, sub-national, national and international levels. In our review of monitoring projects, we were struck by the varied nature of many projects, all of which are driven to a greater or lesser degree by concerns about how best to collectively support children's healthy development.

In order to establish the field of possible models to consider for this project, we decided to look at a range of models that exemplified varied approaches to monitoring social well-being. We narrowed the field to look only at models of third party monitoring and those that were currently being used and/or being produced.

In the following review we have selected five examples of social monitoring. Under each review, we highlight the conceptual framework that was used and the criteria each used to select indicators. In addition, we provide a description of the indicators used and the model's sources of data. Lastly, we assess the strengths and weaknesses of each model as a possible approach for third party monitoring of the ECDI.

4.1 National Models

<p>Title of Model: Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada, annual publication</p>
<p>Organization: Campaign 2000</p>
<p>Goals: Campaign 2000 is a “cross-Canada public education movement to build Canadian awareness and support for the 1989 all-party House of Commons resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. Its goals are to increasing awareness of the levels and consequences of child/family poverty, build the advocacy capacity of member organizations and participating in public and government consultations on child/family poverty, recommend realistic public policy solutions and inform the development of policies and programs at the local, provincial and national level.</p>
<p>Conceptual Framework: The report card describes child poverty in Canada. It reports on selected factors influencing the child poverty and selected consequences of child poverty. In this sense, it follows the basic ecological model.</p>
<p>Indicator Selection: Indicators are selected on the basis of their ability to contribute to the picture of child poverty in Canada.</p>
<p>Description of Indicators: (e.g., the rates of child poverty, the number of children living in poverty, the depth of child poverty, children most at risk of poverty) rate (e.g., public investment, wages required to reach the poverty line) (e.g., housing need, frequent moves, food insecurity)</p>
<p>Sources of Data: The primary data source for the Campaign 2000 Report Card is the Statistics Canada Survey of Consumer Finances. Other data sources are used when necessary to clarify particular stories about child/family poverty and its impact on health and well-being.</p>
<p>Format: Annual Report Card – pamphlet style. Also delivered over the Campaign 2000 website.</p>
<p>Model’s Strengths and Weaknesses for Third Party Monitoring of the ECDI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited number of well-chosen indicators • A focus on trends over time – Canada’s progress towards the goal set forth in the all-party resolution • Targets and audience including policy-makers as well as non-government and community organization • Affordable • Limited space means necessitates a well-defined and limited scope.

<p>Title of the Model: The Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile, published approximately every five years</p>
<p>Organization: The Canadian Institute of Child Health</p>
<p>Goals: CICH seeks to increase public understanding of trends and emerging issues in child health, to support program planning and development at the local, provincial and national levels, to inform voluntary sector and community advocacy, to influence public policy development, to keep the health and well-being of children and youth on the public agenda and to provide a comprehensive picture of child and youth health.</p>
<p>Conceptual Framework: <i>The Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile</i> is developed based on an ecological and developmental framework, comprised of determinants of health and well-being, health and well-being outcomes, and five stages, including (a) pregnancy, birth and infancy, (b) preschool years, (c) school age years and (d) youth. From this framework, a plethora of potential indicators can be generated.</p>
<p>Indicator Selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data are high quality and available at the national and provincial levels – part of the <i>CICH Profile</i> niche is providing data for provincial comparisons • The indicators illustrate an emerging and/or key issue in child and youth health – in some cases, provincial data is used when it is the only data available and when the issue is judged crucial – part of the <i>CICH Profile</i> niche is flagging areas where national data are needed • The indicators are considered important to opening up new approaches to understanding child and youth health and well-being – part of the <i>CICH Profile</i> niche is exploring new approaches to monitoring child and youth health <p>The indicators are relevant, accurate and important – part of the <i>CICH Profile</i> niche is being a trusted national non-governmental source of information.</p>
<p>Description of Indicators: A range of indicators organized by chapter, including pregnancy, birth and infancy, preschool children, school-age children, youth, Aboriginal children and youth, low income, mental health, disability and environmental health.</p>
<p>Sources of Data: Vital Statistics, the Census, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), the National Population Health Survey (NPHS), the Health and Activity Limitation Survey (HALS), hospitalization data), CHIRPP data, the Health Behaviours of School-Age Children Survey (HBSC), BC Adolescent Health Survey and other studies as required.</p>
<p>Format: Currently a comprehensive print report, accompanied by a Pocket Guide</p>
<p>Model's Strengths and Weaknesses for Third Party Monitoring of the ECDI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All but the last of the CICH Profile goals are consistent with those of the Alliance for monitoring the ECDI – the model is successful at meeting these goals • Pocket Guide format could be used to cover specific topics or overview ECDI • Cannot be produced on an annual basis • Expensive to make and to purchase,

Title of Model: <i>The Progress of Canada's Children</i> . Annual, since 1996.
Organization: Canadian Council on Social Development
Goal: To report on important indicators of well-being – those that shape the lives and development of children and families, and those that measure outcomes.
Conceptual Framework: PCC is built on an ecological model. The report tracks environmental indicators that represent the developmental influences that affect child development and progress indicators that are general measures of how well children and youth are faring. Children and youth are defined as those from birth to 24 years. The report tracks five broad environmental indicators: family life, economic security, physical safety, community resources and civic vitality. In addition, it also tracks four indicators of children's progress: health status, social engagement, learning, and labour force involvement.
Indicator Selection: Indicators have been selected in consultation with of a project advisory group and a national panel of experts.
Description of Indicators: A three-tier model has been developed to organize the wealth of data collected for the report. Simple indicators constitute the first tier. They represent data that are measured over time against a base period (1994) to indicate the direction of change. Simple indicators are grouped under a number of intermediate indicators, the second tier. These indicators represent key determinants or outcomes of child well-being. The intermediate indicators are grouped into a third tier of composite indicators that assess both the environment of child development and children's progress through specific developmental periods.
Sources of Data: PCC is based on data drawn largely from Statistics Canada surveys, including the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, the National Population Health Survey, the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, the Census, the National Graduate Survey, the Survey of Household Spending, and the General Social Survey. Data is also drawn from a broad range of secondary sources. In addition, the CCSD conducts its own survey research on selected topics each year and presents profiles of best practices.
Format: An annual report with a separate highlights brochure. PCC is targeted at a broad audience and is designed in an accessible, magazine format. An extensive selection of materials is posted on the CCSD's web site.
<p>Model's Strengths and Weaknesses for Third Party Monitoring of the ECDI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An accessible, annual report that is designed for use at the community and national levels. • Canada's only annual presentation on a broad range of key developmental and outcome indicators. • Contains limited data on services and supports because these data are not readily available. Has no way to access these data. • Relies on specialized expertise to generate primary data – much of which is not available to community groups. • Limited distribution given funding available. • Largely dependent on government funding.

4.2 International Models

Title of Model: KIDS COUNT Data Book. Annual publication.
Organization: The Annie E. Casey Foundation
Goal: The KIDS COUNT Data Book is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the United States. It is intended to illuminate the status of America's children and to assess trends in their well-being. By updating the assessment each year, KIDS COUNT provides ongoing benchmarks with which to evaluate efforts to improve the lives of children at the national level and across states.
Conceptual Framework: KIDS COUNT Data Book reports on 10 indicators for the United States and each state from a base year (1985). They are outcome measures of child well-being that (1) reflect a wide range of factors affecting the well-being of children; (2) reflect experiences across a range of developmental stages – from birth through early adulthood; and (3) are consistent across states and over time, permitting legitimate comparisons.
Indicator Selection: Criteria for selection include: data must be from a reliable source; statistical indicator must be available and consistent over time; statistical indicator must be available and consistent across all states; data item should reflect a salient outcome or measure of well-being; data item must be easily understandable to the public; data item must have a relatively unambiguous interpretation; there should be a high probability that the measure will continue to be produced in the near future.
Description of Indicators: Ten indicators: percent low birth-weight babies; infant mortality rate; child death rate; rate of teen deaths by accident, homicide and suicide; teen birth rate; juvenile violent crime arrest rate; percent of teens who are high school dropouts; percent of teens not attending school and not working; percent of children in poverty; percent of families with children headed by a single parent.
Sources of Data: A variety of primary data sources from the US Bureau of the Census, National Center for Health Statistics, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, etc.
Format: Annual publication.
Model's Strengths and Weaknesses for Third Party Monitoring of the ECDI: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A concise and compelling presentation of data on child well-being in the US.• A limited number of indicators that intended to facilitate comparison over time and between states.• Part of a nationwide network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide a more detailed community-by-community picture of the conditions of children.• Independent funding base. Long-term commitment to project. High profile.• Explicit goal to target policy-makers and citizens. • Expensive.• Limited range of indicators. Constrained by requirement to be available consistently in each state.

<p>Title of Model: Social Watch Report: An international citizens' progress report on poverty eradication and gender equity. Annual publication since 1996.</p>
<p>Organization: Social Watch Coalition. The international secretariat of Social Watch is based in Uruguay at the Third World Institute.</p>
<p>Goal: To monitor the commitments made by governments at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995).</p>
<p>Conceptual Framework: The Social Watch coalition monitors 13 commitments made in Beijing and Copenhagen, selected through a collaborative process involving partners in the Social Watch coalition. (The 13th commitment – improving the availability of affordable housing – cannot be monitored due to lack of adequate information.) Under each commitment, Social Watch monitors progress towards the goals set by individual governments. In addition, summary tables are presented for gender equity, social and defence expenditure and official development aid. Signature and ratification of other key international agreements is also monitored. Social Watch works with national and local coalitions involved in social development in their individual countries to produce country reports. As well, Social Watch publishes various thematic reports each year.</p>
<p>Indicator Selection: Commitments for which there are quantifiable measures have been chosen among the many commitments made in Beijing and Copenhagen. Under each commitment, one or two indicators have been chosen. Indicator selection was guided by data availability among participating countries. Tables are presented for each commitment showing the value of selected indicators for 1990, the last year for which data are available, the rate of progress according to the goal set, and the goal set by individual countries for the year 2000. For commitments in which goals were not linked to specific targets, they took numerically defined goals from other summits where available.</p>
<p>Description of Indicators: Progress in fulfilling commitments made in Copenhagen are grouped under six headings: basic education; children's health; food security and infant nutrition, reproductive health, health and life expectancy; and safe water and sanitation. Three indicators track the situation of women: women's life expectancy; female illiteracy; and net enrolment of girls in primary education. State spending on health, education and defence as a percentage of GNP is presented, as well as the progress that countries have made towards assigning 0.7% of GNP to official development aid.</p>
<p>Sources of Data: Social Watch draws on the most recent sources of information provided by credible international organizations.</p>
<p>Format: A monograph, with pull-out comparative tables. Much of the information is available on the world wide web.</p>
<p>Model's Strengths and Weaknesses for Third Party Monitoring of the ECDI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An excellent example of third party monitoring of commitments made by governments to achieve higher levels of social development. • Extensive involvement of voluntary groups in the design and development of a monitoring tool. • Excellent electronic presentation of comparative data. • Ongoing improvement of monitoring model and inclusion of more countries. • Somewhat technical, sometimes confusing presentation of wealth of material. Not a particularly accessible format.

PART II

5. BUILDING A FRAMEWORK FOR THIRD PARTY MONITORING

This section draws heavily on *Toward an Inclusive Approach to Monitoring Investments and Outcomes in Child Development and Learning (2002)*, by the Roeher Institute. However, the material has been altered and added to in order to meet the needs of this paper. The section has been organized in a way intended to stimulate discussion on the implications of child development, children's rights and the principle of inclusion for third party monitoring of the ECDI.

5.1 Understanding Child Development

Developing a framework for third party monitoring of the ECDI begins with understanding and respecting child development. To formulate a monitoring framework it is first necessary to articulate the assumptions that will underpin it. The following set of assumptions about early childhood development comes from many years of research and experience in child development, and in formulating public policy to promote healthy child development.

- Infants' and children's brains develop through diverse neural patterns, and at a rapid rate in the early years;
- Environmental contexts shape life chances and engender developmental paths;
- Children are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of environmental toxicants because of their rapid growth and development;
- Biological and developmental variation **is** the norm;
- Children and their families require supports to maximize developmental potential.
- Parents and caregivers are essential sources of information about children.

In brief, children develop in unique ways, in relation to others, environmental influences are key and children require different kinds of supports to maximize their developmental potential. A child's development is a unique, personal, familial and community adventure. The challenge is to maximize their chances in many environments to be valued, nurtured, recognized, engaged and included. Clearly a monitoring framework should reveal something about our progress towards this goal.

What are the implications for a set of indicators for third party monitoring of the ECDI?

- It is essential to ensure that the indicators used to track and monitor are consistent with the assumptions drawn for research;
- Indicators should demonstrate something about children's developing capacities and not simply indicate how many children fit "norms".

- Indicators should focus on the influences that shape a child's development, maximizing or undermining potential.

What are the implications for a monitoring process?

- The goal of the monitoring process would shift from reporting on how many children are performing according to norms to how many children are developing, with support, to their full potential;
- Recognize that the personal knowledge of parents, families and others who know a person are essential.

5.2 The Rights of Children

A rights perspective can inform the monitoring framework in valuable ways. Many third party monitors in Canada strongly support the view that children are legitimate holders of rights as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This perspective has implications for the development of a framework for monitoring healthy childhood development and the ECDI. As indicated in *How Does Canada Measure Up?* (CCRC, 1999:5), "Canada needs to develop a comprehensive strategy to increase awareness of children's rights and to galvanize the energy and resources to ensure those rights ... Without data that is comparable across time and jurisdictions, it will remain difficult to monitor children's rights and determine necessary interventions."

Within a rights perspective, the quality of children's lives is important not just because we want children to grow into healthy, productive adults but because we value children's time spent as children. This perspective necessarily demands more than a monitoring of negative influences and outcomes. As Ben-Arieh et al (2001) indicates, policies and programs must seek more than the absence of risks if they are to promote child well-being. This approach highlights the importance of positive indicators that demonstrate how well children are doing and how well families and communities are supporting them.

For many years, monitoring of children focused on basic needs. This matched the social goal – to meet the basic needs of children with a minimum of inconvenience to the broader society. There is a growing recognition that our commitment to children must extend beyond basic needs and that our frameworks for monitoring must reflect this greater commitment. Is every child, rich or poor experiencing a happy, healthy, stress- and carefree childhood? Who isn't? What barriers and challenges are they encountering? Childhood is a unique, non-recoverable period in the life of a person – and should be treasured and valued.

What are the implications for a set of indicators for third party monitoring of the ECDI?

- Indicators should describe the realities of childhood, rather than viewing children as “future adults”.
- Indicators should be designed to identify children who are marginalized and to track society’s success in including them.
- Indicators should address the range of children’s rights.

What are the implications for a monitoring process?

- Monitoring should include an investigation of whether adequate data and information are collected to clearly understand the issues and inform social action.
- Monitoring should be community-based and participatory, with dialogue and commitments for action from all individuals, families and communities.
- Monitoring should be part of a broader plan of action that stresses the responsibility of the state to support the institutions of civil society in meeting the needs of individuals in families and communities.

5.3 Inclusion

The *National Children’s Agenda* and the *Early Childhood Development Initiative* have made a commitment to a strategy that is inclusive of all children and that recognizes that every child has his or her own unique developmental path -- unique physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and creative capacities. The commitment to an inclusive society is at the heart of the *Social Union Framework Agreement* and at the core of Canadian values.

Ecological models for monitoring child health and well-being can be inclusive, but they are not necessarily so. The Roeher Institute has done substantial work on the issue of developing an inclusive framework for monitoring early childhood development and public accountability. They emphasize the importance of selecting indicators that are consistent with the set of shared principles and assumptions that underpin the ECDI and, as such, measure inclusion, promote diversity, identify and measure disparity and focus on developing capacity.

What are the implications for a set of indicators for third party monitoring of the ECDI?

- Indicators should measure inclusion. They should provide insight into society’s success in reducing and eliminating barriers to full participation at home, in school and in the broader community.
- Indicators should explicitly measure the impact of factors, such as disability, on a child’s healthy development and full participation. In an inclusive society, the impact of these factors should be minimized (Walker, 2000).

- Indicators should respect diversity. Diversity should not be tracked and monitored in terms of “deficits”, but acknowledged as the human reality. Indicators should measure capacity. In an inclusive society all children would be supported to fully explore their capacities (Walker, 2000).

What are the implications for a monitoring process?

- All members of the early childhood development community should be involved in determining what should be tracked and monitored and how.
- Members of communities that are vulnerable to exclusion should be consulted to ensure that the third party monitoring of the ECDI is designed to promote inclusion.

6. PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR THIRD PARTY MONITORING

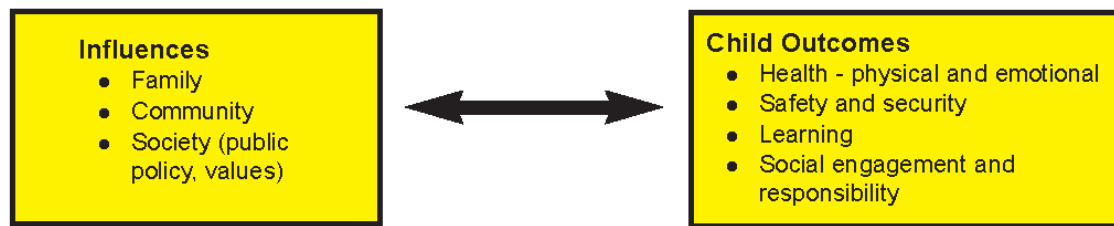
The goal of this discussion paper is to generate discussion on how best to monitor the ECDI from the perspective of a third party – specifically, a non-governmental, voluntary organizations serving and advocating on behalf of Canadian children and their families. We have laid out what we consider to be the building blocks of an approach to monitoring. In this section, we propose a framework for monitoring programs and services under the ECDI. This framework, through a series of questions, draws our attention to the steps that we believe are necessary to effectively report on “improvements and expansion of early childhood development programs and services ... and the well-being of young children in Canada” (ECD Agreement, September 2000). We have chosen to focus on the improvements and expansion of early childhood development programs and services, as there is comparative little thinking about this critical piece of the monitoring framework, compared to the research available on child outcomes.

Step 1: Identifying Key Operating Assumptions

There are many approaches that one could choose in developing a monitoring framework. Indeed, our purpose with this document is to explore the options that exist for third party monitoring of the ECDI and potentially other government initiatives. As a starting point or first step, the research team decided to build our monitoring model upon the basic ecological model of child development advanced in the federal-provincial/territorial National Children’s Agenda Vision document: *Developing a Shared Vision* (May 1999).

As noted above, the basic ecological model looks at determinants of child health and child outcomes across a range of developmental areas. The central idea is to understand children within their varied contexts and how these interdependent factors or contexts influence child development in complex, iterative and interactive ways. In the NCA model, presented below, governments have identified three key sets of influences on child development: family, community and society (here including public policy and values). These influences shape child outcomes across a range of developmental domains. The NCA vision identifies four domains in their model: health, safety and security, learning, and social engagement and responsibility. The stated intent of the Vision document is to “track our progress in achieving these goals by measuring and reporting on key indicators of child well-being and influences on children’s lives” (*Developing a Shared Vision*, 1999: 9)

Figure 1: NCA Child Development Model

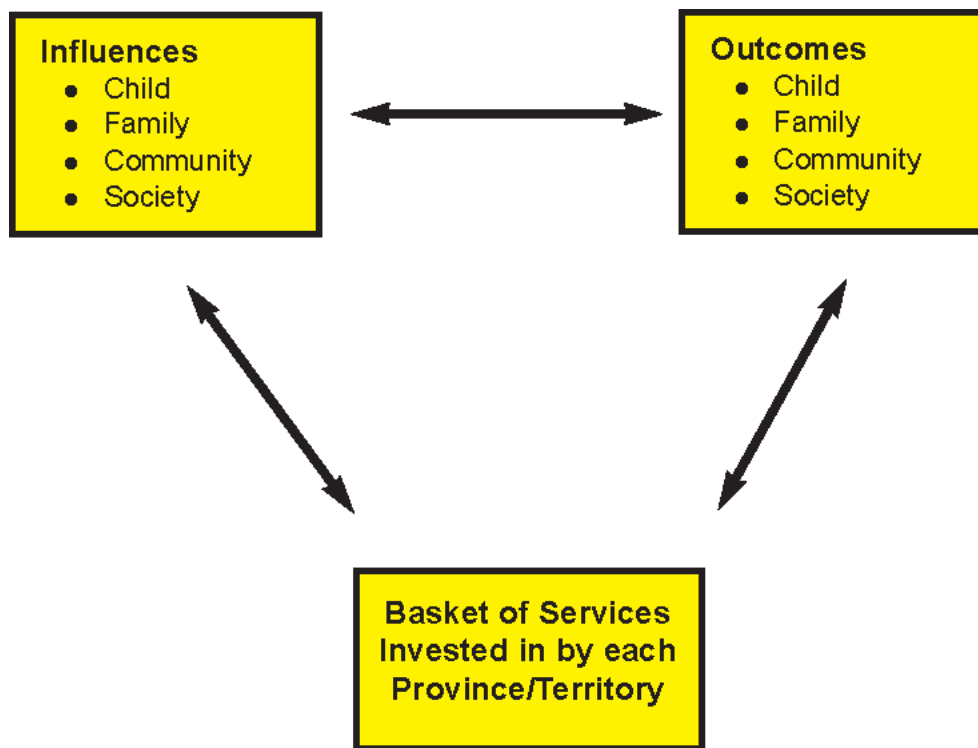


An ecological approach to child development informs most monitoring initiatives of child health and well-being reviewed for this project, including *The Progress of Canada's Children* produced by the CCSD and *The Health of Canada's Children: A CICH Profile*. We believe that this approach can provide a common set of ideas for developing an ECDI monitoring framework. Not only is the ecological model supported by scientific research, it can be used – we believe – to convey complex ideas about child development to a broad audience through popular monitoring tools. As well, by building on the NCA document, it will reinforce the commitment that the federal government and the provinces/territories have made to monitor programs and supports for children and families as well as child outcomes.

That said, the question is how to adapt the basic ecological model so that it can be used to monitor improvements and expansions of ECDI programs. Clearly, public policy and programs serve as key developmental influences on children and youth. Public supports can, in fact, be seen as both an independent factor influencing child development and as a key intervening variable between other developmental influences such as families and child outcomes. To develop this point further, public supports influence and shape all other developmental influences – both directly and indirectly – as well. The difficulty in light of our task is how to position public supports – ECDI action areas – vis-à-vis developmental influences and child outcomes.

To tackle this problem, we propose using the concept “basket of supports” to make the link between the basic ecological model advanced in the NCA and a framework for monitoring the ECDI. In the diagram below, we propose an adapted ecological model of child development.

Figure 2: Adapted Ecological Model of Child Development



In this diagram, we have chosen to retain the basic structure on developmental influences and child outcomes. We have located our basket of supports as both an intervening variable and a developmental influence. The bi-directional arrows establish the paths of influence that move back and forth and through various developmental contexts and child outcomes.

It should be noted that the ECDI would create an impact beyond its target population: children from birth to age 6. Indeed, the focus of any monitoring initiative should extend beyond the individual child to assess other child and youth, family, community and societal outcomes. These broader outcomes are both legitimate and desirable for the well-being of all children. Programs and services that build on and enhance the strengths of individuals, families and communities are key to “growing” healthy children over the short term and importantly, over the long term. While the first cut at the framework looks only at child outcomes, we recognize that family and community outcomes need to be incorporated into ECDI monitoring initiatives. (See the Manitoba Third Party Monitoring paper for a further discussion of this point, appended)

Step 2: Filling the Basket, Creating a Baseline for Monitoring

Having identified the broad outline of our monitoring framework and our key operating assumptions, the next step is to decide what it is we are actually going to monitor. This is no easy task. It is probable that we could achieve consensus on a broad list of supports for children and their families. Indeed, the NCA Vision document does just this, setting out six “interrelated areas where cooperative effort can have positive effects on children.” Similarly, the EDC Agreement focus on four action areas targeting children aged from birth to 6 years: healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; parenting and family supports; early childhood development, learning and care; and community supports. It is another matter to select particular programs and supports in communities across Canada.

We believe that a “basket of supports” can be useful in this regard. It provides the flexibility necessary to monitor the actions – and impacts – of the federal, provincial and territorial governments. It can accommodate a diverse range of supports as well as a diverse range of target populations. It can accommodate universal programs as well as narrowly targeted interventions for selected groups. Indeed, the concept of a basket of supports draws attention to the mix of supports necessary to support – in this instance – young children and their families.

The concept of a basket of supports is also useful because it begs the obvious question as to what goes into the basket. The answer to this question depends upon where you stand: what goes into a given basket can and will vary by province and community and should ideally be determined by a community-based, representative process. The process of filling the basket can serve as an important opportunity for stakeholders to build a monitoring process from the ground up, to reflect the real needs and concerns of children and families at the local level.

The concept of basket of supports, then, can be used to assess what is actually there – on the ground. As well, it can serve to highlight what *should* be there, that is what do individual communities need to best support their children, youth and families. Assessing what is there *and* what needs to be there through a community-based process is critical, in our view, to transforming the ECDI monitoring process from a narrow accounting of public dollars to a dynamic community-building process. Indeed, it expands the notion of accountability inherent in the monitoring process from a focus on the transfer to dollars between governments to the relationship between governments and citizens.

As a part of this exercise, basic information about the programs and supports can be identified, including the scope of service and the level and source of funding. It will be important to identify new programs and supports as well as whether funding for these initiatives is new or has been redirected from another service area or program. This baseline information is critical to understanding how the

federal dollars transferred under the ECD Agreement are being allocated and spent. Concerns have been raised among children’s advocates that these new dollars from the federal government are simply being used to replace or backfill provincial funding for established programs. A key part of monitoring the ECDI will be to establish the extent to which funding for children has actually been increased and led to in new or expanded support for children and families.

What then would a possible basket of supports look like? In order to test out our framework, we tried to develop a picture of what a fairly broad basket of supports and services might look like. What are the types of initiatives that we believe should be supported and monitored under the ECDI? We deliberately ignored jurisdictional boundaries for this exercise and focused on what children need in their local communities. We tried to select two or three programs or supports under each ECDI action area to keep the exercise manageable. As well, we tried to push the envelope with regard to initiatives that should be included in a monitoring framework, not necessarily those that governments might choose to monitor under the ECDI. Our ideas about possible supports to monitor are presented below. Two of the provincial partners have also developed model baskets of support. Please see the appendix.

Figure 3: Potential Basket of Supports

ECDI Action Areas	Possible Programs / Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prenatal support programs (e.g., for teen moms) • maternity / parental leave
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve parenting and family supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family resources programs / CLSCs • municipal services: libraries, recreation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthen early childhood development, learning and care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child care • specialized supports – speech therapy; mental health services, respite, professional development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthen community supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic supports – NCB, SA • housing affordability • safe communities – play spaces, clean environment

Step 3: Measuring Improvement and Enhancement

Developing or identifying a basket of supports for young children and their families is a key step in an ECDI monitoring process. Through this step, an inventory or a map of what is available to support children and families is prepared. This inventory or map can be as comprehensive or as limited as individual communities see fit. However, it is critical in establishing the baseline of services and supports in the community. *How then to go about monitoring “improvements and expansion of early childhood development programs and services ... and the well-being of young children in Canada”?*

We decided to break down the tasks involved in monitoring the “expansion” and “enhancement” of children’s supports. The tables below outline a series of questions related to each monitoring objective that need to be asked about each support in the basket to determine whether they have been expanded or enhanced.

We have defined “expansion” to mean an increase in the scope and funding for a particular program or support. (This would include the introduction of new supports as well). Expansion also denotes an increase in the number of children and families served and/or supported.

Monitoring improvement is a more difficult task. There is no point expanding a program that has not been demonstrated to be effective in enhancing the well-being of children. Clearly, we need to introduce and/or expand those programs that offer the greatest benefit to children. To this end, we have defined “improvement” as enhancing (1) **the accessibility** and (2) **the effectiveness** of a given support. Taking this one step further, we ask two key questions about effectiveness. First: is the support / program effective in theory? (This is the point we raised above.) Second: is the support / program effective in practice? A community may well have a wonderful program in place that has demonstrated its value for children time and again. But if that program is not resourced sufficiently, it is clearly isn’t being effective. In this sense, action needs to be taken to “improve” the support.

The whole question of effectiveness is an interesting one because there is little “scientific” evidence on what actually works, for example, whether highly acclaimed interventions such as home visit for new mothers actually deliver on their promise over the long term. (We will come back to this point below.) Community processes that identify a continuum of supports for children and families should be informed by the best research. Yet, there may always be a tension between what the researchers are saying and what communities believe they need. The call for evidence-based decision-making could well run aground on decision-based evidence making where evidence is marshalled to support decisions that have already been made.

There is no ready solution to this problem. Good program evaluation is essential to program design and implementation. It should be recognized, however, that it won't be the only driver of third party monitoring.

Objective 1: Expanding Supports

Monitoring Objective	Key Question	Sub Question	Possible Indicators
Expanding Supports	Does it exist at all?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for how long? • who funds? • what is the level of expenditure? 	
	Has it expanded?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in terms of level of funding? • in terms of scope of service? • in terms of numbers served? 	

Objective 2: Improving Accessibility

Monitoring Objective	Key Question	Sub Question	Possible Indicators
Improving Supports	Is it accessible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is the reach of the program? • who is served? • are there barriers to access? • does the program meet objectives in terms of reach? 	
	Has accessibility been improved? Enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are more diverse groups served? • are barriers to access being eliminated? 	

Objective 3: Improving Effectiveness

Monitoring Objective	Key Question	Sub Question	Possible Indicators
Improving Supports	Is it effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is this support effective in promoting healthy child development? (is the support effective in theory?) is this support sufficiently resourced? Supported? (is this support effective in practice?) 	
	Has effectiveness been improved? enhanced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> what are the outcomes of this support for children, families and communities? has management and coordination of this support been enhanced? have additional resources been committed to improving service? 	

Step 4: Identifying Indicators to Monitor ECDI Supports/Child Outcomes

The first step in monitoring involves setting the parameters of the activity. What are the key building blocks of monitoring? Next, we have to define what we are looking at. In this case, what should be included in our basket of supports for children and families? Next, we break down the task of monitoring by identifying key questions to guide the process. What does expanding and improving programs and services under the ECDI actually mean? We now need to ask how can we measure success or failure: what indicators are available and/or appropriate to monitor the expansion and enhancement of child supports? What is an appropriate time frame for improving the accessibility and effectiveness of

supports for children and families? How can we go about filling in the blank columns in the monitoring tables above? What time frame is reasonable for specific outcomes? Some outcomes will clearly take longer to achieve than others. What size of effect can be anticipated? This will also be highly variable.

These questions take on a particular meaning in the context of third party monitoring. Certainly, monitoring is important in designing and policy and programs or in ensuring accountability for the expenditure of public dollars. For third party monitors, however, the bottom line is whether these programs are producing real results for children and their families. This point is important because the purpose of monitoring necessarily shapes what kinds of data are collected, how data is collected, and how data are presented.

The very immediacy of the task – monitoring the collective commitment to Canadian children – is highlighted by the lack of basic information at hand to do the job. Reliable, comparable, consistent information on supports for children and families do not exist in Canada. Even within a single service area such as child care, there are no consistent standards that would allow us to determine whether the overall availability, accessibility or quality of child care is improving or deteriorating (Friendly, Cleveland, Lero, unpublished draft). Any ECDI monitoring project will have to hinge on constructing meaningful indicators to track the status of programs, services and supports over time.

To a large extent, this type of initiative is already underway in the health and education sectors. The Canadian Institute for Health Information, for example, monitors the Canadian health care system through its annual report, *Health Care in Canada*, and many supplementary reports on topics such as emergency care. The Council of Ministers of Education works with Statistics Canada and other international bodies such as the OECD to track school achievement and educational system measures. Supports for children and families have simply not received this type of focused attention.

Certainly, child outcome indicators have received a great deal of attention. The federal government has committed millions to dollars to developing one of the world's pre-eminent surveys of child well-being, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. Yet there are only limited sources of data on supports and services in this survey or others, almost none of which is comparative in nature. This problem is compounded by the lack of high quality evaluative research on program interventions for children, a point we raise above, that illustrates the connection – positive or otherwise – between selected interventions and child outcomes.

That said, the task at hand – monitoring program and service initiatives under the ECDI – does not require the architecture necessary to establish the links between programs and child and family outcome, as desirable and important as it is to conduct more evaluation research. Rather, monitoring requires the

development of information systems that track descriptive information on programs, services and supports, drawing upon the lessons learned in other program areas. It requires the political will to generate these comparative data and to make them available beyond a narrow circle of government officials and selected academics so that a third party monitor can effectively function.

Step 5: Thinking about the Intended Audience and Format

The previous steps in our suggested framework for monitoring have laid out a process for thinking about monitoring children's programs and services and generating data necessary to support such an effort. At the same time, we believe it is also important to think about the audience of third party monitoring and the best format to communicate results. This is not a secondary consideration. The intended audience – whether they be parents in the community, service providers or local politicians – will critically influence all aspects of the monitoring process, from questions about data selection, the use of qualitative or quantitative measures, to the process that is established to develop a community basket of supports. Similarly, the format will be important in communicating results of monitoring and thus propel advocacy on behalf of children and families. This is one of the reasons that we included a review of various monitoring / indicator initiatives in the paper, each with a distinctive format.

From our perspective, we believe that the primary audience for monitoring the ECDI must be families and communities. To that end, a popular format that can be used in advocacy efforts should be developed. Consideration should also be given to using electronic media both in the development of local monitoring initiatives, the communication of results, and the development of strategies for positive change. The experience of groups like Campaign 2000 have a lot to offer in considering how best to proceed in crafting coalitions in support of ECDI monitoring and producing popular materials and recommendations to advance child and family well-being.

7. PROVINCIAL PERSPECTIVES ON THIRD PARTY MONITORING

See Appendices.

PART III

8. RECIPE FOR ACTION

To proceed with third party monitoring of the ECDI a number of key steps must be put into place.

Step 1- Building consensus on what is being monitored and how monitoring happens

This discussion paper has proposed a framework for third party monitoring, laying out a number of key issues that underpin an exercise of this nature. It did not attempt to suggest a 'model' for monitoring, but rather the various elements that should be considered when building a model. This is because every region and community across the country operates within its own unique environment and with a different set of commitments on what investments will be made using the funds from the ECDI.

To begin, there must be a clear understanding of what ECDI investments have been committed to by government. Do these commitments match with the goals established by the National Children's Agenda and the ECDI, or do they address only one or two of these goals? Will monitoring be limited to committed expenditures? Will baseline information be collected to map out programs and services in the community and where there were gaps before the ECDI expenditures? How will this happen? In mapping out new programs and services under the ECDI, can it be determined if these represent an enhancement in services, or were monies from existing initiatives simply diverted to new initiatives? Who will develop clear and comprehensive reporting mechanism for programs under ECDI and how will that be done?

Step 2 - Building effective partnerships

In most regions there are existing partnerships among non-government organizations (NGOs), governments, research organizations, and community children's coalitions that can be built on to establish effective partnerships for third party monitoring. Collaboration among the various partners is critical for designing the reporting instrument for programs and services and for collecting and analysing the data. Governments and large research organizations can facilitate access to large survey databases, can share data and information, and can undertake or assist in the analysis about issues and trends relating to child well-being that will help in the understanding and positioning of information gathered through program and service data collection instruments.

Step 3 - Creating political will

A government's will to follow through with commitments made under the ECDI, including the commitments to transparency and accountability, is an essential condition for a successful monitoring initiative. Communities will need to devise strategies for creating or enhancing political will. Some effective strategies would be:

- To build and use effective partnerships to engage governments to work on behalf of children
- To collect and build on best practices from jurisdictions where there has been a demonstrated political will and where effective partnerships are at work on the part of government, NGOs and research organizations to cooperate in sharing information

Step 4 - Obtaining financial resources

Third party monitoring need not entail huge sums of money. Under SUFA, the various jurisdictions are committed to third-party monitoring. Federal and provincial/territorial governments could be tapped for financial resources for setting up program monitoring instruments at the regional level. In-kind supports could be solicited from programs and services, research institutes, universities and other community partners involved in the monitoring exercise. Under the *Data Liberation Initiative*, university partners could obtain large-scale survey data from Statistics Canada that could be used in the analysis by community partners. Jurisdictions who have successful monitoring initiatives could be useful sources of information about effective funding strategies.

Step 5 - Obtaining required data

Existing program and service evaluation reports can be tapped for data relating to the effectiveness of ECDI investments. Qualitative data can be obtained from children, families and service providers about their satisfaction with programs and services through interviews, focus groups etc. done at the community level. While these data do not replace the kinds of data that can be obtained from in-depth research and large-scale survey instruments, they are essential for fleshing out the picture.

On the one hand, lack of data may limit the effectiveness of monitoring. On the other hand, an effective monitoring system can identify data gaps, pointing to the need for different collection instruments, specific research initiatives, and new concepts or questions integrated into existing surveys, thus becoming a driver for better quality data.

Efforts to monitor the inclusiveness of ECDI programs and services will be problematic given the lack of available data for children who are not part of the mainstream – children with disabilities, aboriginal children, children living in

institutions, etc. Collaborative lobbying from all partners involved in the monitoring exercise may be effective in the building of a more comprehensive data collection system to be used for measuring the effectiveness and inclusiveness of programs and services and their outcomes.

Step 6 - Enhancing and improving advocacy strategies

As is evident from the above discussion, advocacy strategies are required every step of the way. Building on best practices collected from the local, regional and national levels is likely the most effective strategy for enhancing and improving advocacy measures. Building and using effective partnerships will also bolster the 'voice' of any advocacy effort. The more partners one is able to bring to the table delivering the same message, the greater the chance of success. Working with governments on board as partners from the beginning also is likely to be far more effective than trying to make inroads on a previously set government agenda.

9. DISCUSSION GUIDE: MOVING THEORY INTO ACTION

Producing this discussion paper is the first step in a process of building support for third party monitoring of the ECDI. Our goal is to generate discussion amongst members of the Children's Alliance to consider how we might best advocate for – and possibly establish – a third party monitoring process. We welcome your feedback.

The organizers of this workshop have allotted time to discuss third party monitoring and how we – as the Children's Alliance – should move forward.

In the Saturday afternoon session, we will discuss two key questions:

1. What does it mean to be a third party monitor? What are the strengths and weaknesses that the children's sector brings to its role as third party monitor?
2. Is the framework presented in this discussion paper useful? Would this discussion paper be helpful in setting up a monitoring initiative in your community?

Following from this, we would ask:

- Do you agree with the broad approach to monitoring the ECDI?
- Do you think that the concept “basket of supports” is useful in setting up a framework for monitoring supports for children and families?
- Are the specific questions in the monitoring framework appropriate?

With the results from the workshop, the authors will be revising the paper and distributing it to National Children's Alliance partners. On Sunday morning, we will consider next steps in developing specific strategies to advance ECDI monitoring on behalf of the Alliance.

PART IV

10. AFTERWORD

The discussion paper was prepared and presented during the National Children's Alliance Symposium: Building Momentum to generate discussion on how best to monitor the ECDI from the perspective of non-governmental, voluntary organizations serving and advocating on behalf of Canadian children and their families. The goal was to stimulate discussion about third party monitoring. From the perspective of the National Children's Alliance, the Symposium provided an opportunity:

- to clarify issues around the ECDI;
- to conduct a dialogue nationally and regionally among various sectors and bring a local/regional perspective to bear on ECDI monitoring; and
- to begin an inclusive policy and program development process.

The following is a summary of the discussion that was held regarding third party monitoring and the content of the discussion paper. There were a variety of opinions presented in response to the guiding questions:

- What does it mean to be a third party monitor? What are the strengths and weaknesses that the children's sector brings to its role as third party monitor?
- Is the framework presented in this discussion paper useful? Would this discussion paper be helpful in setting up a monitoring initiative in your community?

A longer presentation of the discussion can be found in the Symposium Proceedings. What follows is a synopsis of the major points.

What does it mean to be a third party monitor?

On the whole, there was support for the establishing a third party monitor of the ECDI. Participants felt that third party monitoring would serve:

- to hold governments accountable to their commitments and to advocate for the appropriate use of money, to ensure that the ECDI does what it says it will do.
- to raise awareness of children's issues and increase the profile of children's advocates and service providers.
- to pressure governments and others to meet the actual needs of children and families, and not to simply increase expenditures.
- to hold service providers accountable as well.

Establishing a third party monitoring process would be valuable for the children's sector as well. Many participants argued that a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral approach to monitoring would:

- inform whether and how the National Children's Agenda is being advanced. With the right kind of monitoring framework, the Alliance and others could find out whether the initiative was effective, whether services and supports were being expanded and improved as a result of ECDI dollars.
- provide valuable information regarding successes and failures of existing supports for children and families, pinpointing critical and emerging needs at the community, provincial and federal levels.
- inform advocacy in the children's sector around powerful core messages. As process, it might allow service providers to focus on service delivery with the knowledge that advocacy support would be provided. Not everyone would have to spend so much time in advocacy work.

At the same time, some participants wondered if the Alliance itself should become involved in third party monitoring of the ECDI at all. Others wondered, if not us, who? This second group felt strongly that monitoring needed to be conducted from a third party perspective. In particular, third party monitoring was necessary to track programs and services introduced (or repackaged) under the ECDI agreement.

The hesitations about third party monitoring were based on an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the sector as well as considerations about the political environment of the day. Certainly, there was support for third party monitoring. However, it was unclear whether advocacy organizations or service providers should be directly involved in monitoring.

To summarize, the sector brings a number of strengths to its potential role as monitor:

- The children's sector has a strong knowledge (experiential knowledge as well as some program evaluation) of what is working in the community.
- Children's organizations appreciate the importance of adopting a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to monitoring children's supports.
- Children's organizations – including those within the Alliance – are well connected and knowledgeable about their local communities.
- Third party monitor could build on important monitoring and evaluation work currently being done in Canada. Participants spoke about new work by Clyde Hertzman and others such as the Early Childhood Indicators mapping project. Some argued that a third party monitoring mechanism could use this work as a building block, and then focus more specifically on tracking service and support indicators.

While objectivity vis-à-vis various political agendas was described as one of the strengths of the sector, it was also acknowledged that voluntary sector organizations do have their own agendas that could interfere with ECDI monitoring. There could be a conflict of interest if service providers had a controlling interest in a third party monitoring mechanisms that was engaged in tracking and evaluating public supports and services.

Other barriers confronting the children's sector were noted.

- It was acknowledged that the sector has limited expertise in generating and disseminating data, with the exception of a limited number of organizations. Arguably more important in this regard, community advocates do not have access to the data necessary to effectively monitor the ECDI. In this respect, any third party monitor would be beholden to governments to generate and produce meaningful data for monitoring ECDI programs as well as program outcomes.
- A role in third party monitoring might place some organizations in an awkward position vis-à-vis their funding. Would funding be jeopardized?
- Involvement in third party monitoring would mean finding the time, resources and staff to do the work. This will not happen unless the sector is funded to take on this role. And does this ultimately not represent the government off-loading its responsibilities onto the voluntary sector in order to avoid blame for lack of action on improving the lives of children and their families?
- There could be a risk of creating yet another bureaucracy. Some participants questioned whether we need another “new body” – even one committed to monitoring of the ECDI. And would not this body face huge barriers in attempting to monitor both provincial and federal ECDI programs in what is usually a difficult federal-provincial-territorial environment?
- Some wondered if there would be a strong enough interest in the sector to sustain the monitoring.

The discussion explored the different angles of the question what it means to be a third party monitor. On the whole there was general support for establishing this type of monitoring mechanism but there was no conclusion about the role of the Alliance vis-à-vis such a monitoring mechanism.

Summing up, the participants felt it was important to step back and think about the role of the Alliance in third party monitoring rather than getting into the details of a monitoring framework – such as the one proposed in the discussion paper – since at this point nothing is on the table and no strategy has been determined. The Alliance also needs to step back and look at the broader picture of child outcomes and indicators.

The Alliance is not set up to take on monitoring the ECD Agreement. It would use up all its time and resources. Also, it might jeopardize the Alliance if government funding for ECD advocacy is received on one hand, and on the other, the Alliance 'calls them to task'.

As well, participants felt that the Alliance should not be the sole monitoring source but should advocate for another independent body to take on this role. The Alliance could and should be involved in the development of a monitoring framework; this was considered a better use of member's knowledge and expertise. Another independent body would leave the Alliance free to do what it does best: visioning and advocacy. Using the Auditor General as a third party monitor was a suggestion as it has a strong independent voice.

The Alliance could also play a supportive role around accountability by commenting on how ECDI funding is being allocated and spent; on policy and policy analysis; and on the general 'picture' for each province and territory. (A concern was raised here that this role might place the Alliance in the middle of federal/provincial/territorial tensions.)

However, it was acknowledged that there is a danger in getting involved in third party monitoring in any capacity, as involvement could be construed as endorsement of the ECD Agreement and could curtail the advocacy role of the National Children's Alliance. As well, it was not clear to participants that a third party monitor could demonstrate child population outcomes based on flawed programs or initiatives. If a monitoring mechanism – government or third party – was not able to demonstrate improved child outcomes, funding for children's programs or the broader National Children's Agenda could well be cut. No one wants to undermine this initiative.

Do you agree with the broad approach to monitoring the ECDI? Do you think that the concept "basket of supports" is useful in setting up a framework for monitoring supports for children and families? Are the specific questions in the monitoring framework appropriate?

The second question for discussion at the workshop was whether the participants agreed with the approach to third party monitoring set out in the discussion paper.

In general, the group generally accepted the broad approach presented in the discussion paper. Yet, participants were divided as to what exactly a third party should monitor. Should a third party monitoring mechanism track child outcomes and developmental influences or the actions taken under the auspices of the ECD agreement? On balance, participants felt that a third party monitor should concentrate its time and energy on tracking and evaluating government programs and initiatives funded by ECDI dollars. They recommended dropping the

ecological model of child development proposed in the paper and focusing on “the basket of supports.”

In this task, a third party monitor would track the performance and impact of federal and provincial early childhood and development initiatives. This would involve actually documenting what is in individual communities / provinces by way of supports for children and families, and then determining what has been done under the ECDI – where the money has gone.

To this end, the paper proposes to use the concept of “basket of supports” to capture diverse community needs. Again, there wasn’t firm agreement about the utility of this concept. If each basket is different, how can a third party or government monitor whether common child and family outcomes are being achieved? Moreover, the “basket” might be difficult to use to organize monitoring if the communities all have different levels of services and supports to start with – which is indeed the case.

The concept of the basket was also challenged on the grounds that it might be too biased or selective with governments choosing “winners” – highly visible programs that deliver good political returns – rather than canvassing communities about what should be in the “basket” based on real needs. Others in the group felt there was a need to be selective. Not everything can be monitored. Some specific goals are needed.

Other participants noted that it would be important to remember that a monitor will not likely be able to link the specific “basket” to specific outcomes. This has been described as the “attribution problem”. Others questioned whose problem the attribution problem really was. There was agreement however, that the National Children’s Agenda should push for research on quality programs. This kind of research supports decision making around an effective “basket”, and from here government expenditures can be tracked.

Conclusion: Next Steps for the Alliance on the Monitoring Project

The participants suggested that the Alliance explore the strategies listed below.

- Promote the good monitoring models across Canada (particularly Manitoba’s).
- Develop a consensus around what the scope of the monitoring should be and the potential role of a third party monitor.
- Develop a model framework for monitoring the ECD Agreement in a popular report card format, and explore ways and means to support the provincial and territorial coalitions to use it and influence decision makers. Move towards a common tool.

- Explore the Auditor General idea.
- Develop alternatives to ECDI monitoring such as developing videos, publicizing best practices and conducting letter writing campaigns to hold provincial governments accountable to the expenditure of EDCI dollars. There would be different appetites for these kinds of activities.
- Help provinces and territories by sharing information, research and best practices, and by providing a research base for legitimacy and strategies as to how they might move the children's agenda forward in their communities.
- Develop a marketing strategy to promote and broadcast what the Alliance and its provincial / regional members are doing in this area. For example, produce a national poster like "Where's Waldo?" but rather: "Money? Show me the money!"

It was agreed that the Discussion Paper would be completed with input from the Symposium discussions and circulated. The key discussion points will be added to the discussion paper. The new version will be posted on the Alliance website. The Alliance will continue to share the feedback, as this will be used to determine its direction and decisions. In June, the Alliance will come back to the question of third party monitoring and the ECDI, as it examines advocacy for children aged 6 to 12 years.

APPENDIX A
REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

MANITOBA
BRITISH COLUMBIA

**A MODEL FOR THIRD PARTY MONITORING OF
THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE
IN THE MANITOBA REGION**

Prepared by the
Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Prepared for the
Canadian Council on Social Development
Canadian Institute of Child Health
and the
Roehrer Institute

February 28, 2002

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Jan Sanderson	Healthy Child Manitoba
Rob Santos	Healthy Child Manitoba

Introduction

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg (SPC) is a membership-based organization in the voluntary sector committed to providing leadership in social planning and effecting social policy changes. The Social Planning Council is keenly interested in the implications of social policy on Manitoban children. The Council is pleased to have been asked by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), the Canadian Institute of Child Health (CICH), and the Roeher Institute to provide input into the model for third party monitoring of the Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) as it relates to Manitoba. The development of the proposed third party monitoring model for Manitoba was guided by a reference group comprised of individuals and representatives from organizations and government with specific knowledge and interest in the implementation of ECDI in Manitoba.

Unlike some other provinces for which the implementation of ECDI has been limited or insufficiently transparent, the Manitoba government has made a concerted effort to enhance existing early childhood programs and develop additional programs. An important question for monitoring ECDI in Manitoba is not only whether early childhood programs have been enhanced or developed, but whether these programs are actually effective in improving the outcomes for children, and the extent to which the programs build individual and community capacity.

The following paper analyses the applicability of the base model for third party monitoring, as proposed by CCSD, CICH and the Roeher Institute, within the context of Manitoba. Revisions to the model are outlined along with the rationale for the changes. More importantly, the third party monitoring model of ECDI in Manitoba attempts to move the agenda forward from simply monitoring the existence of early childhood development programs to measuring the effectiveness of the programs based on broadly defined outcomes and indicators, incorporating the principles of individual and community capacity building.

Background

Since April 2000, the Manitoba government has made a total investment of \$171,133,100 in programs and services that fall under the four Early Childhood Development (ECD) action areas: pregnancy, birth and infancy; parenting and family supports; early childhood development, learning and care; and, community supports. The total investment includes approximately \$29 million dollars of incremental funding to early childhood development initiatives. Of the \$29 million incremental investment for ECD, the Federal government contributed \$11.1 million in 2001/2002 (Manitoba Government, 2001).

The Manitoba Premier established the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet comprised of the Minister of Family Services and Housing, Minister of Health, Minister of Justice, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, Minister Responsible for the Status of

Women, Minister of Education, and the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism. The Committee's purpose is to implement the Healthy Child Plan and to identify the components of Manitoba's Early Childhood Development Continuum. The following is a list of the nine program areas that form the continuum and a brief description of each program.

Healthy Baby – Prenatal benefit for income eligible pregnant women and support services.

BabyFirst – Three-year home visiting program for newborns and their families.

STOP FAS – Three-year mentoring program for women at risk of having a child with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Foetal Alcohol Effects (FAE).

Parent-Child Centred Approach – The establishment of community coalitions that support parenting, improve child nutrition and literacy, and develop community capacity.

Child Day Care – Expansion of child care spaces, improving salaries for childhood educators, and integration of children with disabilities into the child care system.

Early Start – A three-year home visiting program to enhance children's readiness to learn for families with children who have special needs and are currently attending licensed child care.

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth – An ECDI initiative that will assist school divisions and districts in their efforts to provide services to pre-schoolers to facilitate their readiness to learn.

Children's Special Services – A community-based service that provides support to children with mental and/or physical disabilities.

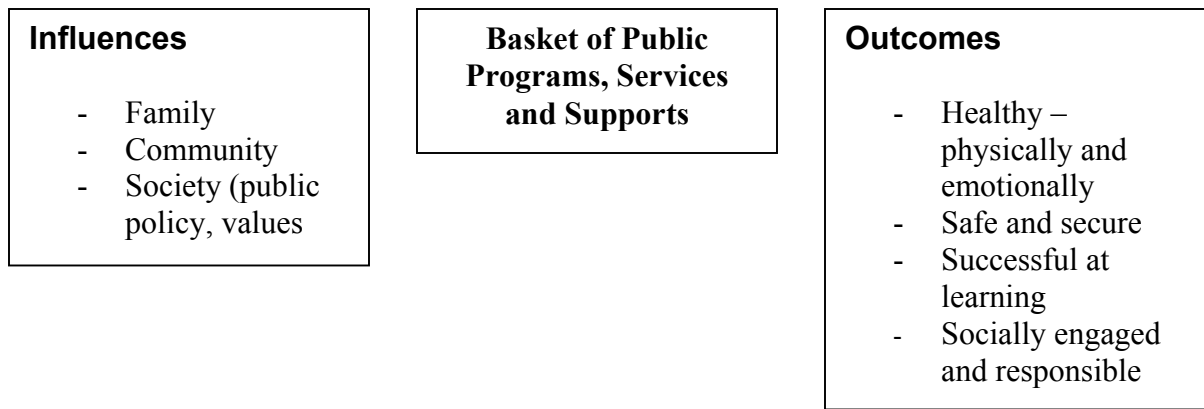
National Child Benefit Restoration – As of July 2001, families with children age six and under receiving Employment and Income Assistance will not have the National Child Benefit reduced from their provincial benefits.

It is important to note that of the nine program areas targeted by the province for early childhood development since the introduction of the ECDI agreement, three are new programs (Healthy Baby, Parent-Child Centred Approach, and Manitoba Education, Training and Youth); five have received additional funding for expansion as a result (BabyFirst, STOP FAS, Child Day Care, Early Start, Children's Special Services); and, one has been partially restored (National Child Benefit Restoration).

An Adapted Ecological Model for Third Party Monitoring in Manitoba

The adapted basic ecological model for use in monitoring improvements and expansions of ECDI programs, as provided by CCSD, CICH and the Roehrer Institute, is premised on the idea that interventions such as social programs are key determinants between influences (family, community, society) and child outcomes. The interventions are conceptualized as a “basket of services” that provide the link between the ecological model and the template for monitoring the ECDI. (Refer to Figure 1)

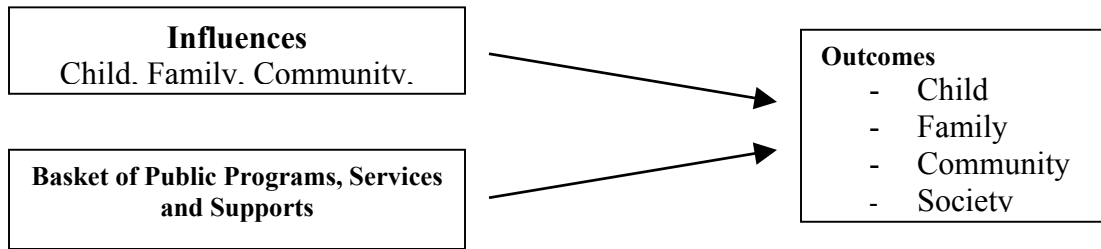
Figure 1: Adapted Ecological Model A.



The reference group agreed with the notion of a “basket of services” to represent the broad list of services and programs that contribute to child outcomes. It was noted, though, that the adapted ecological model (A.) required further modification as the group saw “influences” (family, community, society) as having an equally significant impact on outcomes as the basket of programs, services and supports. The original diagram implies that programs and services are responsible for certain outcomes, all of which are positive. Yet the group believed that services/programs cannot affect outcomes independently of other influences, such as family and community. Also, it cannot be assumed that these outcomes are all positive.

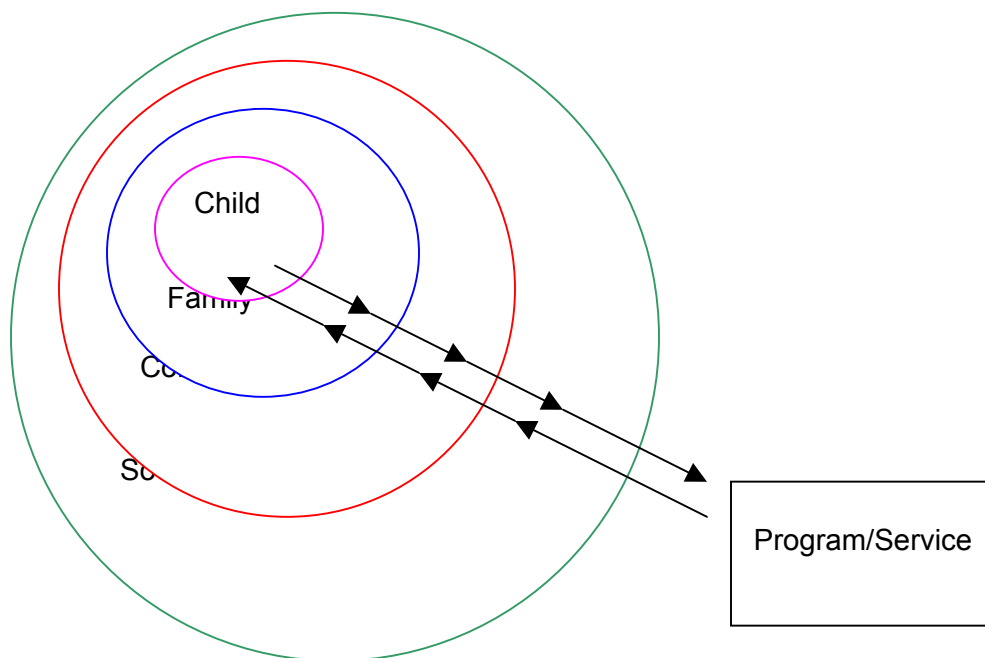
Children, their families, communities, and society are interdependent players in an environmental whole and share a role in influencing child well-being as much as they share the outcomes of varied influences. The linear nature of the original model was considered inadequate to the task of reflecting the complex, interactive and holistic nature of child well-being. The group proposed initial revisions to the model (B.) (refer to Figure 2) that begin to address these issues.

Figure 2: Adapted Ecological Model B.



Unlike Model A in Figure 1, Model B implies that child outcomes are part of the monitoring process along with family, community and societal outcomes. As a program is introduced or expanded, it has an impact at all four system levels – child, family, community, and society. In turn, all four system levels influence one another and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the program. For example, if parents are included in the decision-making structure of a program, their input helps to shape how the program is delivered which impacts child outcomes, effects the community, and has an impact on social policy (societal impact) (Refer to Figure 3). When families, community and society are viewed as active participants with a stake in the outcome rather than as passive influences on child well-being, the program is more likely to result in positive child outcomes. The greater the extent of the impact on all four levels, the greater the chances are that the program will be sustainable over the long term.

Figure 3: Adapted Ecological Model C.



Broadening the focus of the ECDI monitoring process to include child, family, community and societal outcomes is indicative of the community capacity building concept. Community capacity building is based on an individual's, family's, and community's assets as opposed to deficits. Seen in this light, programs/services build on an individual's, family's, and community's existing strengths, which lends itself to sustainable outcomes at all levels (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). To monitor ECDI on the basis of child outcomes only does not provide a complete understanding of the extent of the impact, and subsequent success, of ECD programs/services. A more thorough evaluation of ECDI includes family, community and societal outcomes. As well, child outcomes may not be evident for several years after the program has been introduced, such as improved physical health, and therefore difficult to measure. Outcomes at the family level, such as increased involvement in the community, are likely to be apparent earlier on in the monitoring process.

Determining the Basket of Services/Programs

The primary purpose of third party monitoring of ECDI is to determine the extent to which the provincial government has enhanced or developed early childhood programs, and to determine the impact on child outcomes. As indicated in the proposed model, the basket of services/programs to be considered as part of the monitoring process should be determined based on the extent to which they fall into one or more of the "interrelated areas" that have a positive effect on children, as outlined by the National Children's Agenda (NCA):

- Supporting parents and strengthening families;
- Enhancing early childhood development;
- Improving economic security of families;
- Providing early and continuous learning experiences;
- Fostering strong adolescent development; and,
- Creating supportive, safe and violence-free communities.

The basket can be further categorized, as proposed in the original model, by the Early Childhood Development Action Areas (Refer to Page 1). Categorizing the existing early childhood development programs in the province according to the NCA and ECD areas is important as it assists in determining the "gaps" in services/programs for young children and their families. The ideal result of the ECDI is that there is a continuum of services and programs that address the needs of children, and in doing so, positively impacts families, communities and society. In the case of Manitoba, the nine components of Manitoba's ECD continuum would form the "basket of services" and would be the initial focus of the ECDI third party monitoring process.

Both sets of areas identified by the NCA and the ECD reflect the outcomes for not only children, but for families, community and society. For example, the area of improving economic security of families is being addressed in Manitoba by the restoration of the

National Child Benefit (NCB). Increased income to families results in improved purchasing power for families, e.g. healthy food, which has a positive impact on the physical health of children. Healthier families have a positive impact on communities, and in turn influence future social policy (societal level), such as completely restoring the NCB to families.

Monitoring Improvement and Expansion of ECDI

The language used in both the First Ministers' Meeting Communiqué (2000) and the proposed third party monitoring model is unclear. The terms "improvement", "expansion", and "enhancement" are similar in definition, and thus their meaning and use within the context of third party monitoring requires clarification.

For the purpose of Manitoba's third party monitoring model of ECDI, the term "expansion" will be interpreted to mean increased funding, increased number of program spaces, and increased services attached to the program. The term "improvement" is interpreted as improved accessibility and effectiveness. The term "enhancement" is seen to encompass the meaning of "improvement", and is therefore redundant. Expansion can be viewed as part of improvement, but for this exercise expansion is monitored separately.

Prior to determining the improvement and expansion of ECD programs, it is important that the existing early childhood development programs/services are mapped out at the outset of the monitoring process and that the funding attached to the program/service is identified. The latter is especially important when comparing progress of the ECDI from year to year. For example, decreased funding for a particular program from one year to the next is an important factor in the success of ECDI in the province. The next step is to identify which of the existing programs are new (established within the last government fiscal year) and which have received increased funding (expanded). It is also important to identify if the program's funding is new, or if it has been taken from one program and re-distributed to another. The third step is to categorize where the existing programs fall on the ECD continuum of services according to the four ECD Action Areas so that gaps in programs/services can be identified. The initial stage of the monitoring process is demonstrated in Table 1 using the example of Manitoba's Health Baby Program.

Table 1: Mapping Existing ECD Programs

Program Type	Program Name	New or Expanded	Funding	Increase or Decrease	Funding Source
Pregnancy, Birth, Infancy	Healthy Baby	New	\$4.1 million	Increase	Replaced W.I.N. program but with fewer restrictions.
Parenting and Family Supports					
Early Childhood Development					
Community Supports					

The key indicators for this first stage of the monitoring process are:

1. The extent to which early childhood development programs span the continuum of services required.
2. The level of funding.
3. The extent to which the funding has been augmented or has simply been shifted from one program to another.
4. The extent to which ECDI has resulted in new or expanded programs/services for children and families.

Once the “map” of existing services has been established, the second stage of the monitoring process is to determine the extent to which ECD programs have been expanded. As stated earlier, expansion is reflected in indicators such as increased funding, increased number of spaces, and increased number of services. The increase is determined on the basis of a comparison between baseline expenditures and current fiscal year expenditures. The key indicators are outlined in Table 2 and illustrated using Manitoba’s STOP FAS program.

Table 2: Expansion of ECD Programs

Program Type	Program Name	% Increase in Funding	% Increase in Spaces	Increase in Services (Y/N)	Description of Additional Services
Pregnancy, Birth, Infancy	STOP FAS	Approximately 40%	Unknown	Y	Expanded from two to three sites.
Parenting and Family					

Supports					
Early Childhood Development					
Community Supports					

The expansion of ECD programs/services through increased funding, spaces, and scope of services does not necessarily imply that a program has improved. Improvement of ECD programs is determined by increased access for children and families and improved effectiveness in terms of positively impacting child outcomes, as well as family, community and societal outcomes. Determining the improvement of ECD programs is more difficult than determining expansion. However, of the two, the former is most important within the context of the third party monitoring process in Manitoba. The next section attempts to illustrate a model for determining effectiveness of ECDI in Manitoba.

Measuring Improvement of ECDI Programs

When viewed within the broader context of community capacity building, it becomes evident that in order to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of programs under the ECDI, indicators should be identified for all four system levels that demonstrate pre-determined outcomes. The data that informs each of these indicators will either be qualitative or quantitative in nature. Both types of data are important to the assessment of the outcome(s). For example, gathering data on the number of children enrolled in a program (quantitative) as well as the parent’s perception of the usefulness of the program (qualitative) both provide useful information regarding the degree of program effectiveness. It should be noted though that not all outcomes will have both quantitative and qualitative indicators for each level. Accessibility to programs for children and families is considered to be an outcome of ECDI programs, and is therefore taken into consideration when measuring program effectiveness. The outcomes, as outlined below, are purposely broad in nature so that they can be applied to all types of early childhood development programs.

Outcome 1: The program/service is accessible to children and families.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- Increase in number of children entering the program from previous year. - Reduced waiting list.	- Increase in number of families applying to the program from the previous year.	- The number of referrals made by other organizations.	

Qualitative		- Parents perceive the application procedure to enter the program is inclusive and easy to follow.	- The community demonstrates support for the program, e.g. promotion.	
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Outcome 2: The program meets the needs of diverse communities.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- The number of Aboriginal/new immigrant children participating in the program. - Increase/decrease from the previous year.		- The number of Aboriginal/new immigrant organizations/groups consulted in planning the program.	
Qualitative	- Aboriginal/new immigrant children feel as sense of belonging.	- Family members feel that their cultural values are respected and incorporated into the services they receive.		- Social policy reflects the program needs of Aboriginal/new immigrant families.

Outcome 3: The program contributes to the health and well-being of children and families.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- The number of times a child accesses the health care system.	- Parents access fewer “last resort” services, e.g. emergency rooms, food banks.	- Decrease in youth crime.	
Qualitative	- Children demonstrate fewer behavioural difficulties.	- Families feel supported and empowered.	- Community members feel safer in their communities.	- Social policy includes child and family well-being as a priority.

Outcome 4: The program builds community capacity through participation.

Type of Indicator	System Level Indicators			
	Child	Family	Community	Society
Quantitative	- Number of children more engaged in the community as a result of the program.	- Number of parents participating in the program’s decision-making process, e.g. board membership.	- Number of community members volunteering or hired in the administration of the program.	
Qualitative	- Children feel they have choices, abilities, and skills as a result of participating in the program.	- Parents believe that they have opportunities to provide input and effect in the program planning.	- The extent to which local organizations are aware of the program.	- Social policy incorporates community directives in program planning and evaluation.

The above-noted outcomes and table of indicators provides a model of measuring program effectiveness from a broad perspective. The indicators can be tailored to the individual program, but the outcomes should remain consistent for all programs. It is recognized that the data required to implement this model may not be readily available, and at the very least, will need to come from a variety of sources. The next section

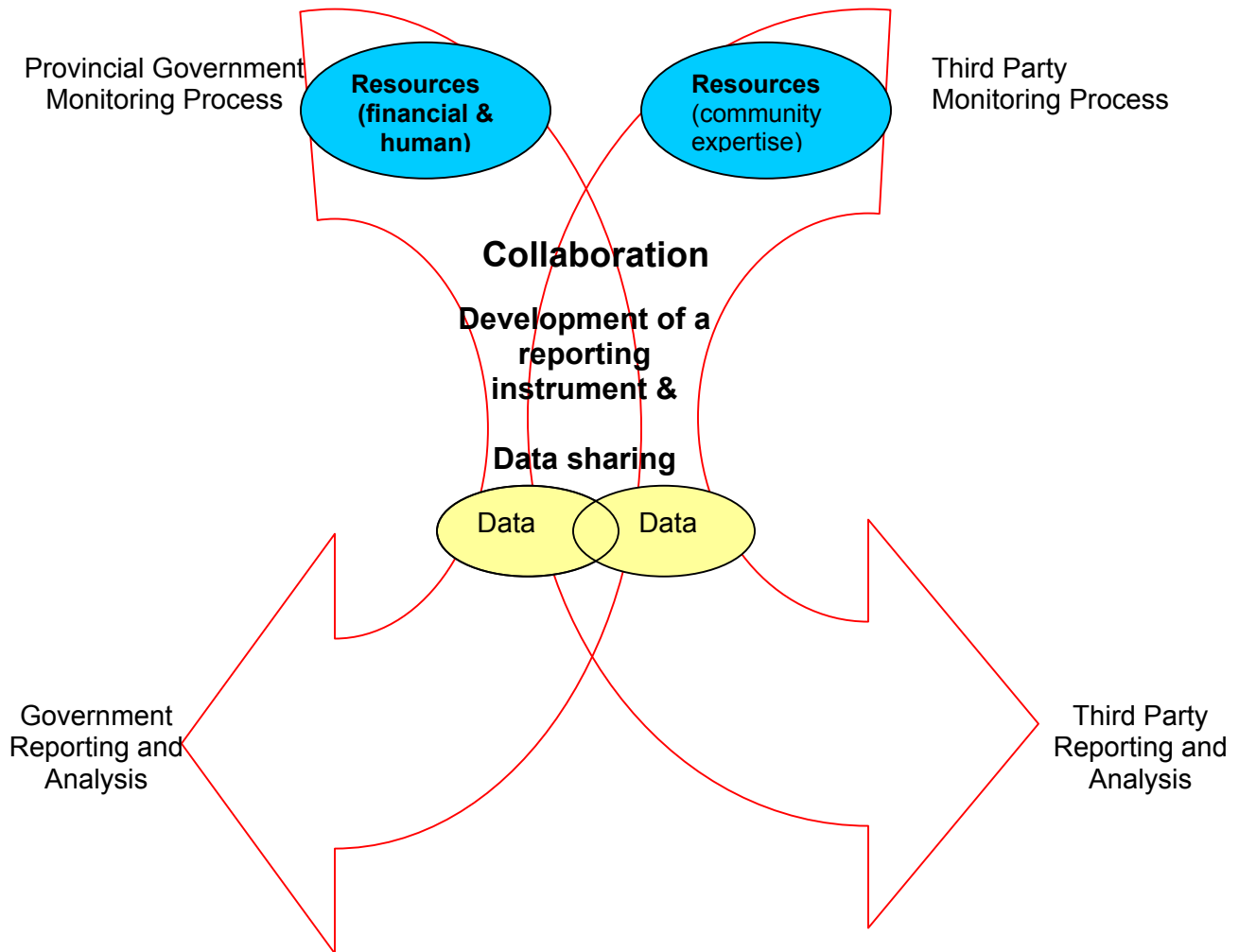
attempts to address the issue of data availability by outlining the factors involved in the implementation of such a model.

Implementation of a Third Party Monitoring Model of ECDI in Manitoba

The success or failure of a third party monitoring model of early childhood development programs in Manitoba is dependent on three key factors: 1) A clear and comprehensive reporting mechanism for programs under ECDI that includes quantitative and qualitative data; 2) partnerships between the government, non-government organizations, and the broader community; and, 3) financial resources to develop and implement a program monitoring instrument. In Manitoba, there are existing partnerships between non-government organizations (NGO's) and research organizations, as well as partnerships between NGO's and government, and established community coalitions working to further child well-being initiatives. This factor combined with the Manitoba government's will to follow through with the ECDI creates a climate in which to successfully implement the monitoring model outlined in the previous section.

Despite the potential for collaboration, it is still necessary that the province and the community conduct separate progress evaluations of the ECDI. The collaborative effort, though, will be extremely important in terms of data gathering and data availability. For example, the province and the community can work together in the design of the reporting instrument for the programs. As well, research organizations with access to large databases, such as the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation (MCHPE), can share information not retrievable through the reporting instrument, e.g. the impact of poverty on children's health. The analysis and reporting of the findings can be accomplished jointly as well as separately, depending on the degree of similarity in each of the party's objectives. What follows is a simplistic example of the implementation process.

Figure 4: Implementation of a Third Party Monitoring Model of ECDI in Manitoba



The potential barriers to implementing this model are a lack of will on the part of government, NGO's and research organizations to cooperate in sharing information, as well as a lack of available data specific to Manitoba communities. Limited availability of data specific Manitoba's First Nations communities is especially problematic. This model could potentially be a basis from which provinces and communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, can advocate for the need for the availability of more comprehensive data on which to measure the effectiveness of programs and services.

Concluding Comments

Manitoba is in a unique position as it relates to the Early Childhood Development Initiative. The Manitoba government's effort to establish a continuum of early childhood development programs combined with the existing partnerships among government, non-government and research organizations provides for an excellent climate in which to implement a comprehensive third party monitoring model of ECDI. The third party monitoring model described in this paper attempts to capitalize on the collaborative environment and the political will to improve child, family, and community well-being.

The community capacity building concept provides the basis for the monitoring and evaluation of early childhood development programs as it incorporates the broad outcomes and indicators of child and family programs, recognizing the existing strengths of children, families, and communities, and their role influencing outcomes.

It is recognized that this model would not be feasible with provincial governments that have implemented ECD programs on a smaller scale and/or that have been less transparent with regard to their activities. It was the consensus of Manitoba's reference group, representing government and non-government agencies, that this process provided an opportunity to take advantage of Manitoba's unique position to move forward the agenda of evaluating early childhood development programs.

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Response to

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

A British Columbia Perspective

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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 ECEDI funds are being spent in the province.
- There is little likelihood that individual ECEDI 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 ECEDI programs.
- The reporting and evaluation requirements of ECEDI 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 ECEDI.

Observation from First Call:

- There is currently no group with the mandate or resources to monitor federal or provincial government activities in ECEDI.
- 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 databases 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 ECEDI 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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First Call Goal One: To Improve Pregnancy Outcomes

ECDI Action Area: Promote healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy

What Do Children and Families Need?	Areas of Provincial Government Responsibility (Best Basket)	BC Government Programs (Before ECEDI Basket)¹	ECEDI Improvements and Expansions (ECEDI Basket)
Public Education	Include ECD in school curriculum with preschool, elementary and high school students. Promote understanding of ECD issues affecting children and families	<i>School programs</i>	
Nutrition	Promote breast feeding Provide supplements	<i>Healthiest Babies Possible Prenatal Programs School-based programs for young parents Enforcement intermittent throughout BC</i>	
Healthy Environments	Enforce legislation with regard to tobacco and second-hand smoke Prenatal education	<i>Healthiest Babies Possible School-based programs for young parents Building Blocks Pre natal classes Family Resource Programs Good Food Box Community Kitchen</i>	
Parent Education and Parental Supports	Promote strong role for fathers “Mothering” programs that are culturally sensitive Promote links to community resources Home visiting	<i>Healthiest Babies Possible School-based programs for young parents Building Blocks Pre natal classes Family Resource Programs Good Food Box Community Kitchen</i>	
Early Detection of Difficulties	Provide home visits of all newborns by PHN Prenatal screening	<i>Healthiest Babies Possible School-based programs for young parents Building Blocks</i>	
Secure Attachment	Promote secure attachment Screen for maternal depression Provide priority access to mental health, addictions and detox services for women	<i>School-based programs for young parents Building Blocks</i>	
Safety	Screen for domestic violence in prenatal period	<i>School-based programs for young parents Building Blocks</i>	

Healthy Connections

¹ First Call is still working to complete this list of programs that are funded all or in part by the Provincial Government. No assessment has been made of how completely a program meets an area of Provincial Government responsibility. Some programs address multiple needs and in some areas, gaps are becoming apparent where there are no programs.

First Call Goal Two: To Support Parents of Young Children
ECDI Action Area: Improve Parenting and Family

What Do Children and Families Need?	Areas of Provincial Government Responsibility (Best Basket)	BC Government Programs (Current Basket) ¹	ECDI Improvements and Expansions (ECDI Basket)
Public Information	Provide information about early childhood development to all parents including First Nations parents, recent immigrants, parents in rural and remote communities		
Parenting Support and Education	<p>Promote healthy parent-child relationships</p> <p>Promote family literacy</p> <p>Promote parent literacy</p> <p>Promote social opportunities amongst families</p> <p>Enhance connectedness of families to community resources</p> <p>Access to recreational opportunities</p> <p>Provide programs to off reserve Aboriginal families in cooperation with mainstream agencies and services</p>	<p><i>Family Resource Programs</i></p> <p><i>Mother Goose</i></p> <p><i>Nobody's Perfect</i></p> <p><i>Building Blocks</i></p> <p><i>Community Kitchens</i></p> <p><i>Neighbourhood Houses</i></p> <p><i>Good Food Box</i></p>	

¹ First Call is still working to complete this list of programs that are funded all or in part by the Provincial Government. No assessment has been made of how completely a program meets an area of Provincial Government responsibility. Some programs address multiple needs and in some areas, gaps are becoming apparent where there are no programs.

First Call Goal Three: To Build a System of High Quality, Affordable, Accessible Child Care Services
ECDI Action Area: Strengthen early childhood development, learning and care

What Do Children and Families Need?	Areas of Provincial Government Responsibility (Best Basket)	BC Government Programs (Current Basket) ¹	ECDI Improvements and Expansions (ECDI Basket)
<p>Access to regulated, high quality, affordable non-parental care arrangements regardless of family circumstances</p>	<p>Establish universal access to quality, regulated, licensed child care</p> <p>Provide a full range of services that meet diverse family needs</p> <p>Engage in comprehensive community planning for child care</p> <p>Build delivery models that integrate child care with other family supports</p> <p>Provide subsidies that correspond with cost of child care while transitioning away from user pay system</p> <p>Establish First Nations jurisdiction over child care (on and off reserve).</p> <p>Expand parental leave provisions and progressive family/work policies</p>	<p><i>Child Care is primarily market driven and funded by parent user fees. Some support systems are partially funded by the BC government.</i></p> <p>For Children and Families</p> <p><i>Subsidy for low income families</i></p> <p><i>Child Care Resource and Referral</i></p> <p><i>Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre</i></p> <p>For Providers</p> <p><i>Child Care Resource and Referral</i></p> <p><i>Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre</i></p> <p>ECE Training Programs</p> <p><i>Provincial Grant Programs including Compensation Contribution, Emergency Repair, Replacement and Relocation and Infant Toddler Incentive Grant</i></p> <p><i>BC Association of Child Care Services</i></p>	
<p>Enriched environments that</p>	<p>Establish Provincial child care regulations that</p>	<p><i>Community Care Facility Act and Child Care</i></p>	

<p>promote healthy early childhood development</p>	<p>ensure quality care environments Promote inclusion of children in programs of family choice Promote training for child care providers Provide wages, benefits and working conditions that reflect the value of the work Include parent education and support that promotes meaningful parent involvement</p>	<p><i>Licensing Regulation</i> <i>Supported Child Care</i></p>	
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¹ First Call is still working to complete this list of programs that are funded all or in part by the Provincial Government. No assessment has been made of how completely a program meets an area of Provincial Government responsibility. Some programs address multiple needs and in some areas, gaps are becoming apparent where there are no programs.

First Call Goal Four: To Develop and Enhance a System of Early Identification, Support and Intervention for Families With Children at Risk for Developmental Delay and Children with Disabilities
ECDI Action Area: Strengthen Early Childhood Development and Care (same as previous chart)

What Do Children and Families Need?	Areas of Provincial Government Responsibility (Best Basket)	BC Government Programs (Current Basket)¹	ECDI Improvements and Expansions (ECDI Basket)
Public Education	Provide public education about the risks and benefits of immunization	Regional Health Authorities	
Intervention Services for Children	<p>Provide universal immunizations including meningitis (meningococcal and pneumococcal) and chicken pox (with choice to opt-out)</p> <p>Provide access to universal early screening programs for all children e.g. Ages and Stages Assessment, ASQSE</p> <p>Expand neo natal follow up to children over 800 grams</p> <p>Provide intervention services for children at risk for developmental problems</p> <p>Support early intervention for Aboriginal children both on and off reserve</p> <p>Full inclusion of children with their peers in high quality early childhood education programs</p>	<p><i>Infant Development Programs</i></p> <p><i>Aboriginal Infant Development Programs</i></p> <p><i>HIPPY</i></p> <p><i>Supported Child Care</i></p>	
Supports for Families	Provide supports to families addressing children with developmental delays/disabilities		

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ECDI Action Area: Strengthen Community Supports

First Call: Focus on government role in strengthening community supports

What Do Children and Families Need?	Areas of Provincial Government Responsibility (Best Basket)	BC Government Programs (Current Basket) ¹	ECDI Improvements and Expansions (ECDI Basket)
Public Education	<p>Make information accessible to all</p> <p>Shift public attitudes and values about children as a private responsibility</p>		
Policy Development	<p>Develop an impact checklist to look at government decisions from the lens of consequences to children and families</p> <p>Address adequate income and income inequality</p> <p>Implement entitlement of food security, mental health support, housing, transportation, adequate income</p>	BC Family Benefits legislation	
Coordination of Services	<p>Facilitate inter-ministry planning and initiatives</p> <p>Establish tables that bring government/ corporate sectors and community together</p> <p>Sustain community networking and collaboration</p>		
Evaluation of Services	<p>Promote ongoing research and program evaluation</p> <p>Promote ongoing development of best practice guidelines</p> <p>Establish standards for community agencies that are monitored and enforced</p>	Centre for Community Child Health Research Human Early Learning Project (HELP)	

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