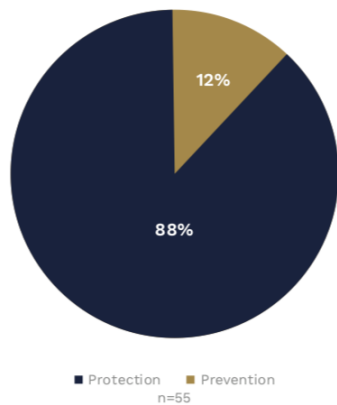




Briefing Paper: Using resources to effectively support child and family well-beingⁱ.

Child protection systems are designed as final backstops to social challenges and often do not address the underlying causes of family difficulties. Currently, child protection approaches tend to invest in reactive crisis response measures rather than proactive prevention and early intervention measures, which tends to be more costly and less effective. Studies illustrate that the social and financial costs of children coming into contact with the protection system far outweigh the costs of prevention and early intervention efforts. In its 2018 study of First Nations Child and Family Services agencies, the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy found that nearly 90% of an agency's federal allocations targeted protection services.

RATIO OF FEDERAL PROTECTION VERSUS PREVENTION EXPENDITURE



Source: Gaspard, H. Enabling First Nations Children to Thrive. Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa. December 15, 2018.

The effectiveness and sustainability of any public service is influenced by the approach through which funds are allocated and the context in which service providers convert these funds into services that respond to child and family needs. The allocation and management of funds can impact the services delivered for children and families, ultimately, influencing outcomesⁱⁱ.

To ensure better child and family outcomes and shift the current protection-based approach to one that is focused on well-being, a fundamental change in program funding processes is needed. Such a change would enable communities and service providers to redirect funding to

address the root causes of a child's contact with child protection services to the benefit of children and their families.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) has defined a needs-based funding approach and well-being focused performance measurement framework for First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS). With the participation of 76% of FNCFS agenciesⁱⁱⁱ, IFSD was able to construct a bottom-up portrait of spending, spending relationships, and gaps in FNCFS agency operating budgets. IFSD was able to illustrate a clear relationship between the number of children in care and the size of an agency's total budget, meaning that the higher the number of children in care, the bigger the budget. The relationship between total budget and the number of children in care suggests that the current system is funded for protection. The system has incentivized the placement of children in care to unlock funding.

IFSD makes a number of recommendations including that issues such as poverty ought to be recognized and addressed through policy, programs and funding; and that prevention efforts should be funded on a per capita basis for the entire population served by the agency (including both children and adults).

While multiple jurisdictions and approaches to delivering child and family services across the country make it difficult to examine financial models in mainstream child welfare, much can be learned from two, high performing urban Indigenous Child and Family Services Agencies. The holistic approaches of Native Child and Family Services of Toronto and Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services Manitoba provide innovative financial models that could be applied to mainstream child welfare practice, and in various communities with access to different resources.

Example 1: NATIVE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES (NCFS) TORONTO, ONTARIO¹

From one central office and 18 satellite offices totaling 285 staff, NCFS delivers culturally-informed^{iv} child and family services, including prevention and protection, to Indigenous Peoples in Toronto, those passing through Toronto, and across Canada^v. Originally established as a prevention organization in Toronto in 1986, NCFS had to advocate for 18 years to obtain a child protection mandate from the Province of Ontario. NCFS learned early on that its funding sources had to be diverse, to build their culturally-informed practice.

NCFS' core funding comes from their role as a child and family service provider organization; this means that other organizations pay them to deliver services because they are good at what they do. In its reporting and internal reviews, NCFS actively seeks to demonstrate the impact of its service delivery model for funders and for its own internal planning. The funding structure from multiple sources enables NCFS to incorporate prevention initiatives in a creative way, to find resources to deliver in the best interests of the child and the family, and to build its practice with a long-term vision of strengthening families and keeping them safely together.

While NCFS' core funding is stable, resources to build culturally responsive, community-based programming is dependent on securing funding from grants and donors. Senior

¹ This case has been reproduced from [Funding First Nations child and Family Services \(FNCFS\): A performance budget approach to well-being](#) (see p. 168-170 for the full case study).

leadership regularly seeks out 10%–15% of their overall funding to ensure needs-based programming can be developed and delivered. Operating as an urban agency, NCFCS is also faced with the challenges of housing shortages and homelessness, mental health and addictions. To address the challenges, the agency breaks down service delivery silos by leveraging their resources to address the needs of children and families in a holistic way, through a broad spectrum of programs and services across prevention, early intervention and child protection.

Diversifying the way organizations use their funding provides more flexibility in the way they deliver services to children and families. While not all child welfare service providers will have NCFCS's diverse resource base, it is important to know that funding mechanisms can positively influence agency service delivery. The opportunity for a block-funding approach^{vi} in FNCFS would promote cohesive responses to child and family needs, and reduce the siloed billing practices in place.

Urban Indigenous populations are growing and continuously require culturally informed services. Resourcing these activities is a constant challenge. With the 2016 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling of discriminatory practices in federal underfunding of on-reserve First Nations child and family services, there is a strong case to revisit how agencies serving urban Indigenous communities are being resourced to deliver on their mandates.

Example 2: DAKOTA OJIBWAY CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES MANITOBA²

Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services (DOCFS) is not a novice when it comes to emergency response^{vii}. From floods, to ice storms, to now, a pandemic, the agency has responded to protect the most vulnerable in the eight First Nations communities it serves. An integral component of a broader Tribal Council structure, DOCFS works collaboratively with other organizations (e.g. health, education) and community-based offices. Daily directors' calls and constant contact help them coordinate actions and response to changing circumstances across the Tribal Council.

DOCFS wants kids and families to be healthy and safe. Emergencies don't stop this drive; they amplify it. DOCFS provides essential services to children and families, and it remains available 24/7 during a crisis (as it would in regular times). As concerns for the safety and well-being of children and families can increase during emergencies, DOCFS' actions in emergency response extend beyond the physical safety of children, and includes food security, supplies and educational resources.

DOCFS' business continuity plan^{viii} serves as a roadmap for the agency's action during a crisis to fulfil its core mandate and maintain (at least) their basic operations. In one half-day, DOCFS' entire business continuity plan structure can be mobilized, as staff are pre-briefed and familiar with their responsibilities. Staff have pre-assigned roles and areas of

² This case has been reproduced from [Funding First Nations child and Family Services \(FNCFS\): A performance budget approach to well-being](#) (see p. 172-174 for the full case study).

action for which they are responsible in an emergency. This enables the organization to keep a measure of consistency when faced with unexpected crises.

DOCFS also emphasizes the importance of advocacy for their agency. From the Tribal Council's Chief to Indigenous Services Canada to outside resources, DOCFS advocates to 'anyone who will listen,' to ensure their organization and children in care have what they need. Building a reserve fund and practicing active resource-development are ongoing. This helps to ensure that when a crisis hits, there is some flexibility in the budget. As an alternative funding approach for child and family services is being developed, options for emergency funding are being considered. Combinations of funding mechanisms are being explored to propose tools to respond to immediate needs, as well as to address the underlying challenges that influence crisis management. DOCFS is a helpful example of a well-coordinated agency that leverages resources beyond its organization to respond in a timely and decisive manner in the face of emergencies.

Additional resources:

Enabling First Nations Children to Thrive: <http://www.ifsd.ca/web/default/files/public/First Nations/IFSD Enabling Children to Thrive February 2019.pdf>

Funding First Nation child and family services (FNCFS): A performance budget approach to well-being: https://www.ifsd.ca/web/default/files/FNCFS/2020-09-09_Final%20report_Funding%20First%20Nations%20child%20and%20family%20services%5B1%5D.pdf

For shorter briefs on this work see:

[1. What's this work about?](#)

[2. Connection to CHRT](#)

[3. Connection to An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families \(formerly, bill C-92\)](#)

Beyond Neglect is a Child Welfare League of Canada project, proudly supported by Children's Aid Foundation of Canada's COVID-19 Child and Family Support Fund.



ⁱ This briefing paper is based on the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy's report *Funding First Nations child and Family Services (FNCFS): A performance budget approach to well-being* which leverages data specifically from First

Nations Child and Family Services agencies. While general research on well-being is consistent across jurisdictions, the claims made here relate to FNCFS and cannot be made about expenditure patterns in mainstream agencies.

ⁱⁱ Commission to approach sustainable child welfare (2011). A new approach to funding child welfare in Ontario. Final report. Retrieved from: https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/en/CPSCW_2011aug-Funding.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Gaspard, H. (2018) Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD), 2018, *Enabling First Nations Children to Thrive*, Retrieved from:

http://www.ifsd.ca/web/default/files/public/First%20Nations/IFSD%20Enabling%20Children%20to%20Thrive_February%202019.pdf

^{iv} As related to: Cultural safety is an outcome based on respectful engagement that recognizes and strives to address power imbalances inherent in the health care system. It results in an environment free of racism and discrimination, where people feel safe when receiving health care. Cultural humility is a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience.

Retrieved from: <https://www.fnha.ca/wellness/cultural-humility>

^v Gaspard, H. (2020) *Funding First Nations child and family services (FNCFS): A performance budget approach to well-being*. Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa. https://ifsd.ca/web/default/files/FNCFS/2020-09-09_Final%20report_Funding%20First%20Nations%20child%20and%20family%20services%5B1%5D.pdf, p. 168-170.

^{vi} Resources are allocated based on a combination of previous financial data (to fund maintenance and protection) and need (e.g. population size, geography, poverty level, etc.). Service providers have flexibility to adjust allocations (e.g. operations and capital; protection and prevention). Funds can be reallocated if not spent and this approach allows access to emergency funding. From : https://ifsd.ca/web/default/files/FNCFS/2020-09-09_Final%20report_Funding%20First%20Nations%20child%20and%20family%20services%5B1%5D.pdf

^{vii} Gaspard, H. (2020) *Funding First Nations child and family services (FNCFS): A performance budget approach to well-being*. Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa. https://ifsd.ca/web/default/files/FNCFS/2020-09-09_Final%20report_Funding%20First%20Nations%20child%20and%20family%20services%5B1%5D.pdf, p. 172-174; see also, Appendix P.

^{viii} Business continuity planning (BCP) is the process involved in creating a system of prevention and recovery from potential threats to a company. The plan ensures that personnel and assets are protected and are able to function quickly in the event of a disaster. From: [https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/business-continuity-planning.asp#:~:text=Business%20continuity%20planning%20\(BCP\)%20is,the%20event%20of%20a%20disaster](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/business-continuity-planning.asp#:~:text=Business%20continuity%20planning%20(BCP)%20is,the%20event%20of%20a%20disaster)