



# Saskatchewan's Children and Youth Strategy

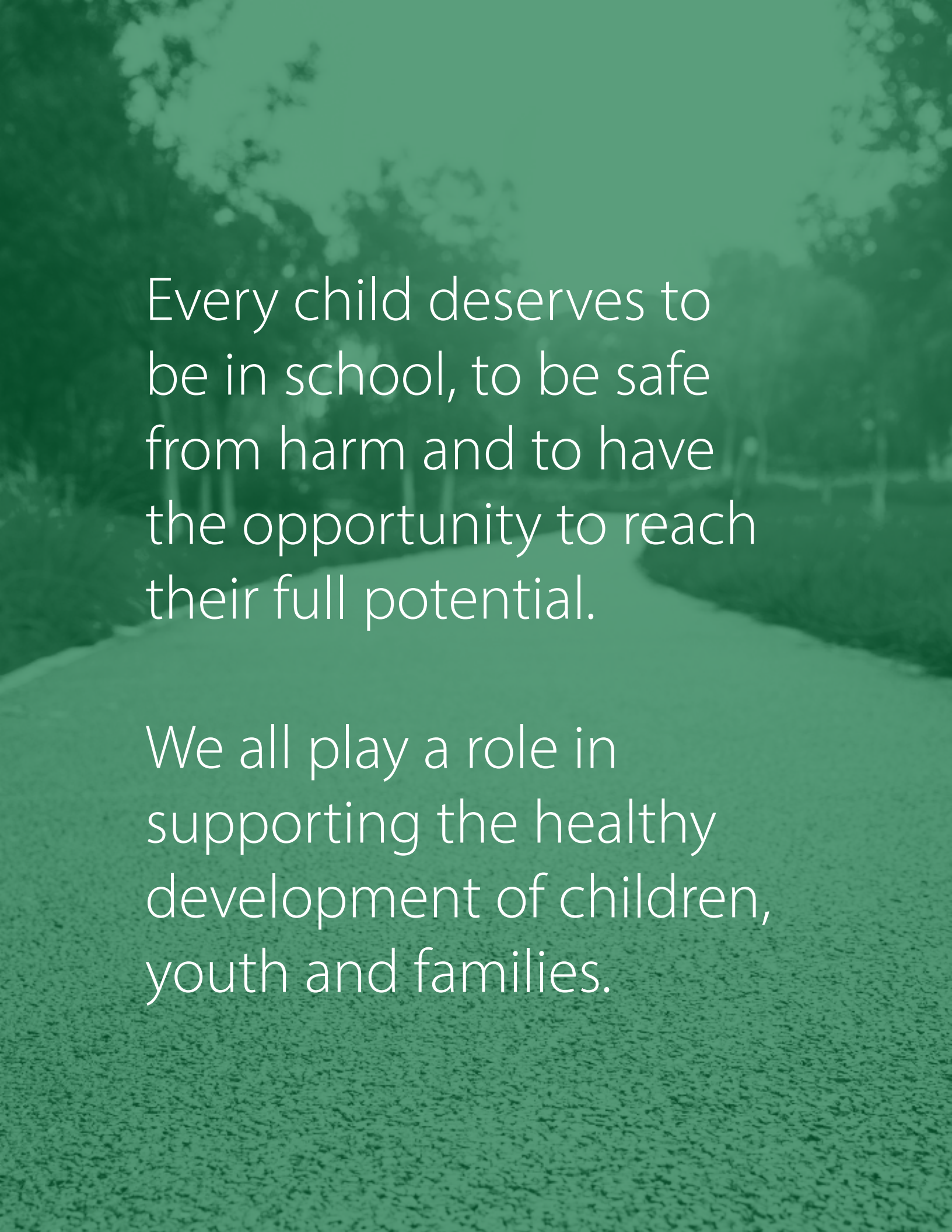
Strong families. Strong communities. A better quality of life.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[saskatchewan.ca](http://saskatchewan.ca)

**Saskatchewan** 



The background is a green-tinted photograph of a paved path that curves through a wooded area. The path is light-colored and leads from the foreground into the distance, flanked by trees and foliage. The overall tone is peaceful and natural.

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# Saskatchewan's Children and Youth Strategy

## Strong families. Strong communities. A better quality of life.

Every child deserves to be in school, to be safe from harm and to have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We all play a role in supporting the healthy development of children, youth and families.

Ensuring Saskatchewan children get the best start in life and grow into strong, healthy, thriving citizens requires cooperation among multiple government ministries and service agencies, community-based organizations, and education, health and social service partners.

For over a decade, the Government of Saskatchewan has increased investments to a broad array of programs, services and community partners to help strengthen families and improve outcomes for Saskatchewan's children and youth. New programs and targeted initiatives have been developed to address the complex issues facing children, youth and families.

*Saskatchewan's Children and Youth Strategy* is built on the foundation of Saskatchewan's Growth Plan. The purpose of growth is clear: to build a better quality of life for Saskatchewan people – to build strong communities and strong families – and grow a stronger Saskatchewan now, and for the future.

### Saskatchewan's Growth Plan - Strong Families. Strong Communities. A Better Quality of Life.



#### A Strong Start for Children

Healthy early childhood and foundations for lifelong wellbeing.



#### Growing Knowledge and Abilities

Learning and training paths to success from middle childhood through emerging adulthood.



#### Fostering Inclusivity and Respect

Ensure safe, equitable and inclusive environments, moving forward in Truth and Reconciliation.



#### Supporting Healthy Children, Youth and Families

Enable children and families to thrive through mental health, positive parenting and intensive health supports.



#### Building Safer Communities

Addressing complex social issues through coordinated prevention and intervention approaches.





*Saskatchewan's Children and Youth Strategy* is the foundation upon which to undertake this work - and the commitment to continue developing partnerships between stakeholders, delivery partners and institutions.

The strategy outlines five theme areas that contribute to healthy children, youth and families throughout their stages of development, along with a continuum of programs and services that support a range of ages and complexities of need.

- Within each theme, areas of focus are identified.
- While specific sections of this strategy highlight mental health and reconciliation initiatives, there are references and examples across all themes due to their foundational nature.
- A comprehensive list of programs and services by theme is detailed in the appendix, including information on how to access services.

Parents and caregivers draw upon resources and support systems that include a wide variety of non-government sources, including extended family, cultural, faith and community supports. These resources help ensure their physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural and developmental needs are met. Moreover, every child's development benefits from access to sports, arts, recreation and community activities.

There are many ways that ministries and partners are working together to collaborate and deliver programs today. However, we know there is more work to do to better integrate, coordinate and align programming and investments, making it easier for families to access services and to ensure those services meet their needs through all stages of development.

# A Strong Start For Children

## Healthy early childhood and foundations for lifelong wellbeing

To ensure Saskatchewan children get a good start in life, the Government of Saskatchewan invests in programs and services across ministries, agencies and community-based service providers that support the healthy development of children. This includes early years health needs and interventions, support to parents to nurture and raise healthy children, and early learning and high-quality child care in healthy, safe and nurturing environments that support positive child development. This also includes health care and educational supports for children who experience developmental delays or are at risk of delay.

Quality of life and well-being also include access to culture, science, sport, recreation and nature. Government and community-based programs and activities begin at this early age, and continue through a child's formative years, to support lifelong healthy habits and wellness.

### Areas of Focus:

- **Early Intervention and Healthy Supports** - Healthy supports for newborns and young children and helping families provide a safe, nurturing environment.
- **Childcare and Early Learning** - Ensuring children can access programming that supports their growth and development.
- **Foundations for Well-Being** - Supporting children and youth to develop lifelong healthy habits and wellness.

# Growing Knowledge and Abilities

## Learning and training paths to success from middle childhood through emerging adulthood

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to the success and well-being of all Saskatchewan children and youth. We want each student in our province to receive the support they need to experience success in their education, to become a lifelong learner and an engaged citizen. This includes investments in Saskatchewan's Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) system, post-secondary educational institutions and training opportunities on the path to employment.

Post-secondary education is vital to the growth of the province, supporting people to build their skills and meet current and future needs of the economy. The Government of Saskatchewan supports students to continue their learning by providing financial aid through tax credits, grants, loans and scholarships.

The ministries of Education and Advanced Education will continue to work in partnership with school divisions and post-secondary institutions to identify the best possible way to put the

needs of our students first to prepare children and young people for a successful future – which also ensures a bright and successful future for our province.

### **Areas of Focus:**

- **Learning Supports** - Providing supports and opportunities to enable successful learning and reducing barriers to education.
- **Paths to Employment** - Providing youth with opportunities to explore their interests, develop skills and plan for their transition to the workforce.
- **Well-Equipped Educators** - Ensuring educators are well supported and have the skills and tools they need to help students navigate mental wellness and online safety.

## Fostering Inclusivity and Respect

### **Ensure safe, equitable and inclusive environments, moving forward in truth and reconciliation**

Our government is committed to being an inclusive province where everyone can be themselves, be respected, feel safe and take part in their communities. As children and youth develop and grow, it is important they are provided the opportunity to thrive, while being embraced for who they are as individuals through identity, abilities, gender, sexual orientation and all ways of self-expression.

This is especially important for children and youth, as experiences in our formative years have a significant impact on shaping our development, mental health and well-being and opportunities for success as adults.

Our schools must be safe, equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students.

Programs and services for children and youth with disabilities must address and recognize their specific needs and help alleviate and eliminate any barriers.

All children and youth must be supported within their customs and cultural traditions and provided with opportunities that recognize their full potential. In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, thoughtful and focused supports for Indigenous children are essential for success.

The Government of Saskatchewan remains committed to the continuous process of advancing reconciliation in partnership with Indigenous people, communities and all citizens across the province. We are responding to many of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action directed at provinces and more.

Our government is committed to strengthening partnerships with First Nations and Métis organizations to better break down barriers, negative stereotypes and move towards healthier outcomes for Indigenous children and youth today and into the future.



### Areas of Focus:

- **Accessibility and Inclusion** - Ensuring children and youth are well supported to be themselves, with opportunities for success in their communities.
- **Reconciliation** - Working in partnership with First Nations and Métis organizations to acknowledge the history of Indigenous people, connecting Indigenous children with their culture and traditions, and creating opportunities for Indigenous youth to live, learn and work in Saskatchewan.
- **Youth Voices** - Empowering youth to share their experiences and become leaders in our communities.

We all want our children and youth to be safe, healthy and happy, and to have the opportunities they need to grow into healthy, responsible, contributing adults.



# Supporting Healthy Children, Youth and Families

## **Enable children and families to thrive through mental health, positive parenting and intensive health supports**

Our government is committed to supporting healthy children, youth and families – including providing mental health and addictions, physical health and parenting supports.

We all want our children and youth to be safe, healthy and happy, and to have the opportunities they need to grow into healthy, responsible, contributing adults. The Government of Saskatchewan ensures a broad range of supports and services are available to children and youth. While certain programs or services may be targeted for those children or youth who have ongoing health needs or are struggling the most, the intent of one coordinated strategy is to support all Saskatchewan children – no matter their circumstances – to overcome challenges and reach their full potential.

A mental health continuum helps identify how well or unwell a child is doing – with the goal to help children fully reach their potential. Supports and services are in place for serious and persistent mental health disorders, for children and youth experiencing less severe mental health and behavioural challenges, and for those who are at risk of developing mental health and behavioural problems. Work is also taking place with partners to promote positive mental health in children, youth and families, including prevention and mental health promotion, early identification and intervention.



Children need supportive environments to thrive and excel. Ensuring young people, parents and caregivers have what they need to create a supportive healthy environment involves the coordinated and collaborative efforts of many ministries, partners and community-based organizations. There are many examples of integration and collaboration that exist across our province today to support and strengthen families, and provide access to the very best care for children and families to improve outcomes for children, youth and families in the future.



**Areas of Focus:**

- **Mental Health and Addictions** - Proactive prevention programs to support mental wellness in young people, and targeted and easy to access mental health services for those who are struggling.
- **Supported Families** - Strengthening families through parenting and family programs, and supporting families in need to safely care for their children through intensive supports.
- **Intensive Health Supports** - Ensuring parents and caregivers have what they need to support children and youth with ongoing or complex health conditions and create a supportive environment.

## Building Safer Communities

**Addressing complex social issues through coordinated prevention and intervention approaches**

Saskatchewan children and youth should be able to live, learn and play safely in their communities. Our government invests in programs and services across ministries, agencies and community-based service providers to support safer communities through prevention, intervention and accountability. Child and youth concerns are a key focus and priority in strengthening communities.

A broad range of human services ministries work together to address complex social issues through a coordinated and strategic approach. By enhancing enterprise planning and budgeting, aligning approaches and providing efficient decision-making, we are working to improve citizen-centered services for vulnerable people.

Weaving a safety net for community wellness through coordination of services, current programs address mental health and addictions, enhance restorative justice, and promote alternative measures such as fostering positive relationships and life skills. It also provides wraparound and transition services that support families in need while they get back on their feet.

**Areas of Focus:**

- Prevention and Intervention- Enhancing community supports and services targeted to safety and mental wellness.
- Community and Facility-Based Justice- Empowering youth to address barriers and build positive relationships so they can thrive in their communities.
- Transitions- Ensuring children, youth and families are safe and supported.

# Saskatchewan's Children and Youth Strategy

## Conclusion

Through the vision of *Saskatchewan's Children and Youth Strategy*, we have a strong foundation of programs, services and supports that are available today to meet the needs of our children and youth and to set them up for success in the future.

We know more work needs to be done. The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to a better quality of life for children and youth in Saskatchewan. This includes building on today's approaches and connections, and broadening awareness around the importance of taking a holistic approach to ensure our children and youth are thriving and excelling. Where they require further supports, we have built integration for safety nets to ensure successful outcomes.



*Saskatchewan's Children and Youth Strategy* will guide our current and future work through continued direct investments to support children, youth and families, and collaborative efforts to build better integration between child and youth services. This work will ensure children have the opportunity to reach their full potential and grow into strong, healthy, thriving citizens.

**An annual comprehensive listing of programs and services can be found for each theme below at <https://saskatchewan.ca/children-youth-strategy>.**

- A Strong Start for Children
- Growing Knowledge and Abilities
- Fostering Inclusivity and Respect
- Supporting Healthy Children, Youth and Families
- Building Safer Communities