



**Better Beginnings
Vibrant Childhoods
Empowered Youth**

Research that makes a difference





Table of Contents

	A Message from the Scientific Director	2
	Land Acknowledgment	3
	Collaborating with our Research Community	4
	Guiding our Work	5
	Areas of Focus	6
	The Path Forward	7
	Making a Difference	10
	Acknowledgments	11

A Message from the Scientific Director



On behalf of the CIHR Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health (IHDCYH), it is my great privilege to share our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan. IHDCYH has a strong history of leading innovative and impactful research, and through this new plan we will continue to support our research community to play a central role in addressing the needs of children, youth and families by advancing evidence and equity.

The past Scientific Directors have shown tremendous leadership and made significant contributions that have advanced human development, child and youth health research in Canada and globally. I thank them, along with the incredible IHDCYH team and advisors, for their tireless passion and energy to deliver impact for children, youth and families through health research. We continue to build on this strong foundation, shaping a bold vision that puts children, youth and their families at the heart and centre of our Institute – from ideas to impact.

Underlying this Strategic Plan is our shared commitment with CIHR to achieve the best health for all, powered by outstanding research. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the other CIHR Institutes who each play an important role in helping us realize our vision through their own mandate areas. I thank CIHR and the Government of Canada for supporting this

Institute and recognizing the critical need for the work underway within our research community.

This work is needed now more than ever. Together, we can foster a healthy future for Canada through research that promotes better beginnings, vibrant childhoods, and empowered youth.

Christine Chambers, PhD FRSC FCAHS

Scientific Director, CIHR Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health



Land Acknowledgement

IHDCYH is hosted at Dalhousie University. We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which we developed this Strategic Plan is Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. As an institute with national reach, we honour all Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) from coast to coast to coast, for their past and ongoing contributions to society. We strive for respectful partnerships with Indigenous Peoples on a path towards healing, reconciliation, and self-determination. Members of our research community are invited to learn about and reflect upon the Indigenous Peoples whose traditional territories they reside on.



Collaborating with our Research Community



Our **research community** includes the many voices engaged with human development, child and youth health research, including researchers, research staff, children, youth, families, caregivers, clinicians and health professionals, associations, policymakers and others.

This Strategic Plan was developed with input from a broad range of people and organizations across our research community, including through our most recent Institute Review, and in collaboration with CIHR to ensure alignment with the CIHR Strategic Plan 2021-2031. Thank you!



Engaging with partners and the public

In 2020-2021, we co-founded Inspiring Healthy Futures to develop a vision and priorities through broad community engagement, including over 1500 youth, parents, researchers, educators, advocates, policymakers, service providers, community and business leaders. The priorities, including impactful research and knowledge, provide a foundation for leaders, organizations and governments to create a healthier, stronger future for children, youth and families in Canada.

Hearing from researchers

Our 2021 researcher survey gathered perspectives from a diverse cross-section of respondents on challenges, opportunities, current funding programs and activities, and how IHDCYH can continue to enhance support for our community.

Guidance from IHDCYH advisors

Our Institute Advisory Board and Youth Advisory Council played key roles throughout the development of the Plan. They engaged in Inspiring Healthy Futures consultations, informed the design of the researcher survey, and advised on priority development, partnerships and alignment with the CIHR strategic plan and research environment.

Guiding our Work



The term **children, youth and families** encompasses infants, children, youth, reproduction and pregnancy, parent(s), caregivers, and elders, as well as the diverse communities that encircle and support them.



Vision

Better beginnings, vibrant childhoods, empowered youth.

Mission

Foster growth and equity across Canada's human development, child and youth health research community to advance science, promote knowledge and ways of knowing, and address the needs of children, youth and families in Canada and globally.

Our commitment

- We engage with and address the needs of children, youth and families within a lifecycle context.
- We embed reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion across our activities.
- We ensure reliable communication and open dialogue about the work our Institute and our research community leads.

Our values

We embrace the values of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR):

- Excellence and Leadership
- Commitment to Collaboration
- Respect for People
- Integrity and Accountability



Areas of Focus

Better Beginnings

Vibrant Childhoods

Empowered Youth

These areas of focus exist within a complex and important context that includes families, communities and the systems that surround, support, impact and influence them.



We want to ensure the best start in life. We support the earliest years of life, from pre-conception through reproduction, pregnancy, infancy and early childhood, when we have the greatest ability to positively impact human development and trajectories.



We want children to lead healthy, happy lives. We address the needs of children to improve health and help them thrive as they navigate the complex systems of our changing world.



We want to encourage youth to take charge of their lives. We engage youth and hear diverse perspectives to ensure health and equity continue from teenage years to maturity and adulthood.



A **lifecycle approach** recognizes and values that age, life stages, and intergenerational factors impact health.

The Path Forward



Measures of success

- Partnerships advance the Institute's mission and strategic priorities
- Emphasis on and breadth of interdisciplinary collaborations is increased
- Diverse children, youth and families are integrated into Institute and research community activities
- Research community is well-funded for human development, child and youth health research

Strategies

- Build and sustain purposeful partnerships
- Support growth of interdisciplinary collaborations
- Engage children, youth and families
- Catalyze research community success in open funding opportunities

Priority 1 Convene

We will facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations and enable purposeful partnerships to strengthen research, mobilize knowledge and shape policy.

The big picture

Children, youth and families experience the best possible health and well-being, informed by high-quality research that is interdisciplinary, built on strong partnerships and integrates their needs and voices.

The Path Forward



Measures of success

- New knowledge is generated in areas of need and strength
- Knowledge is effectively mobilized and communicated to appropriate knowledge users
- Institute activities reflect respectful engagement and opportunities for Indigenous health research
- Lifecycle approach is adopted by other Institutes and across CIHR more broadly

Strategies

- Advance research in areas of need and strength
- Mobilize knowledge and communicate effectively
- Support an Indigenous path in all activities
- Drive a lifecycle approach

The big picture

Children, youth and families see, feel and champion the value of science and research that addresses emerging needs, reconciliation and health inequities, advances care, and is inclusive of all stages in the lifecycle.

Priority 2 Champion

We will fuel existing strengths, catalyze emerging areas and embrace a lifecycle approach to advance knowledge, address health inequities and inspire support for science.



Priority 3 Capacity Build

We will support diverse career pathways and strengthen key infrastructure to improve efficiency, amplify impact and nurture a thriving health research environment.

Strategies

- Support recovery from pandemic impacts
- Engage with our research community to support key infrastructure
- Shape a comprehensive data strategy
- Take a holistic approach to the career pathway

Measures of success

- Research community is sustained and revitalized by recovery-focused support
- Research community is aware of and can access key infrastructure
- Knowledge is advanced by greater access to data
- Targeted support is available to facilitate successful career pathways

The big picture

Children, youth and families benefit from a thriving health research environment that improves equitable access to evidence and knowledge, innovative therapies and treatments, and networks of care and support.

Making a Difference

See our impact

Download our [Making A Difference](#) one pager highlighting top successes and initiatives over the past year.

“Our vision – better beginnings, vibrant childhoods, empowered youth – requires an engaged research community. The path forward for IHDCYH is the result of input from partners and many others. I look forward to working with IHDCYH to support our researchers and to seeing the impact of our work together.”

— Dr. Steven Miller

Head, Department of Pediatrics, UBC

“Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) represent the fastest growing and youngest demographic in Canada. As an emerging Indigenous scholar, I know IHDCYH’s commitment to strengthening Indigenous-led health research will benefit our youth today and the generations to come.”

— Taylor Morriseau

Ph.D. Candidate, University of Manitoba

“I truly appreciate IHDCYH’s commitment to engage those of us with lived experience to bring a different perspective and create meaningful and impactful research.”

— Fabiana Bacchini

Executive Director, Canadian Premature Babies Foundation

“As an aspiring researcher and healthcare professional, I am excited that IHDCYH is supporting diverse career pathways. Diverse backgrounds bring unique perspectives and lived experiences to health research to advocate and ensure that all communities are represented.”

— Nifemi Adeoye

Youth Advisory Council member

“I’m so pleased to see that this plan builds on IHDCYH’s strength in supporting research on reproduction and human development. This focus ensures that we are continuing to lay the foundation for healthy starts to healthier lives.”

— Peter Leung, PhD

Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, UBC

“I applaud IHDCYH’s lifecycle approach. By encouraging research from pre-conception through to adolescence and beyond, we will ensure the health of both current and future generations.”

— Kristin Connor, PhD

Associate Professor, Carleton University



Acknowledgments

We thank the IHDCYH Integrated Institute team, our connectors in Ottawa, who support our alignment with CIHR priorities and provide immeasurable support in the delivery of all our activities.

We also give special thanks to the countless individuals in our research community who have generously given their time to share their insights and perspectives in support of this Strategic Plan.

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The Institute of Human Development, Child and Youth Health is proud to be one of the thirteen institutes that make up the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

About CIHR

At the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), we know that research has the power to change lives. As Canada's health research investment agency, we collaborate with partners and researchers to support the discoveries and innovations that improve our health and strengthen our health care system.

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