



# IN YOUR COMMUNITY

## CHILLIWACK

YEAR OF REPORT 2024

### Community Impact Report 2024



In 2021, the **Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)** announced a province-wide transformation plan to provide wrap-around support for children and youth with support needs. Recognizing the unique needs of each community, MCFD funded initiatives to foster collaboration and gather input from families and community partners. The Fraser Valley Child Development Centre (FV CDC) led the community collaboration project in Chilliwack.

## Table of

# CONTENTS

01

## Community Engagement Approach

We engaged through workshops and facilitated discussions, ensuring safe and inclusive spaces for all participants. Feedback was gathered in multiple stages to refine our understanding of community needs.

02

## About the Community

Chilliwack is a growing and diverse community where families face unique challenges, including economic pressures, long commutes, and increasing support needs for children.

03

## Information Collection Process

Insights were recorded through various methods, including surveys, interviews, and interactive tools, ensuring comprehensive and accurate data collection.

04

## What We Heard

Community strengths, service gaps, and future needs were identified. Key themes emerged, highlighting areas of success and opportunities for system improvement.

05

## Identified Solutions

Proposed solutions focus on enhancing service accessibility, building stronger networks, and fostering community-based support for children and youth.



# About Chilliwack

## Building a Stronger Network of Support for a Growing Community

### Overview

Chilliwack is a rapidly growing city balancing its expanding population with the need for enhanced services. Economic pressures, long commutes, and increasing support needs for children have created demand for accessible resources, especially as young families continue to relocate here for more affordable living. Thanks to the dedicated work of the Chilliwack Child and Youth Committee – Early Years subcommittee, vulnerabilities—tracked through the Early Childhood Development Index (EDI)—are starting to decline. COVID-19 has further highlighted the need for early intervention, reliable access to support services, and mental health resources. Chilliwack’s strong sense of community and collaboration position it well to build a more inclusive and effective network of care.



**“I am so grateful for the centre and for my consultant. I really hope they get more services. There is nothing more frustrating than waiting for an assessment and being told ‘time is of the essence’.”**

## **N** NOTE TAKING

Detailed notes were recorded during interviews, workshops, and in-community engagement.

## **S** SURVEYS

Paper and electronic surveys were distributed to community partners and participants for additional structured feedback.

## **E** EMAIL

Follow-up emails and meetings were held throughout engagement, to clarify responses and gather further insights.



# Information Collection

To ensure all voices were heard, Fraser Valley Child Development Centre (FVDC) and The Discovery Group (TDG) employed a variety of methods to gather comprehensive insights from the community. Through a combination of detailed note-taking, surveys, and follow-up email correspondence, we collected both structured and qualitative feedback. These diverse approaches ensured that community perspectives were accurately reflected and helped us identify clear, actionable themes for improving services and supports.



# What We Heard



## Strengths

**The main provider of services for children and youth with diverse abilities is the Fraser Valley Child Development Centre (FVDC).** The FVDC works collaboratively with community partners to deliver innovative, evidence-informed services.

**Innovative and Accessible Programs:** The FVDC's programs, delivered in partnership with other community providers, are highly valued. Programs like CALM and Mother Goose receive frequent praise, with one parent noting, "The Mother Goose program fills up within an hour of opening— those who get in love it."

**Strong Community Networks:** Chilliwack has strong, collaborative tables like the Chilliwack child and Youth Committee and Early Years Subcommittee where community partners coordinate for collective impact. There is strong collaboration between the FVDC and Indigenous partners.

**Trusted Leadership and Collaboration:** The FVDC is recognized as a leader in child and youth development and a key connector in the community, appreciated for its collaborative approach.

## Challenges and Gaps

**Transportation Barriers:** Many families struggle to access services due to transportation challenges, especially those commuting long distances.

**Service Accessibility and Wait Times:** Long waitlists for essential services like autism assessments and speech therapy create significant stress for families. "The wait after a diagnosis is often worse than waiting for the diagnosis itself," one parent commented.

**Training and Support for Early Childhood Providers:** There is a gap in training for child care providers in managing children's behavioral issues, which could help prevent escalated challenges.

**Systemic Hesitancy:** Participants noted that families are increasingly wary of engaging with systems, often feeling judged or stigmatized when seeking support.

**Stigma and Crisis Management:** Many families feel a sense of urgency and are often in crisis due to economic pressures, limited child care options, and insufficient social support.

### Fraser Valley Key demographic trends and community dynamics:

**Population Growth:** The Fraser Valley has experienced a population increase of 7.7% to 11.2% over the past five years, reflecting rapid growth and increased demand for community services.

**Community Connection:** 72.7% of residents report a somewhat strong or strong sense of community, showcasing a foundation of local collaboration and support.

**Vulnerability Indicators:** The Early Development Instrument (EDI) indicates that 32.7% to 41% of children in the Fraser Valley are vulnerable on multiple developmental scales, emphasizing the need for targeted early intervention services.

# Community Needs

## **Universal Programming and Drop-In Sessions:**

Families requested more frequent drop-in programs and universally accessible playgroups to reduce the need for intensive referrals.

**Stronger School Transitions:** Participants highlighted the need to continue the same level of support as children move into school settings and when youth graduate high school.

**Increased Communication and Follow-Up:** Parents want to see earlier follow-up after training sessions, to assist if initial strategies don't work.



## **WHO WAS INCLUDED**

- Chilliwack Child and Youth Committee
- Chilliwack Early Years subcommittee
- Stó:lō Service Agency Health Services
- Chilliwack School District 33
- Chilliwack Society for Community Living
- Big Brothers
- Chilliwack Learning
- Cyrus Centre
- RCMP
- Restoring Justice
- Wilmas
- Hope Transition
- Chilliwack Community Services
- Pacific Autism Family Network
- Pacific Community Resources Society
- University of the Fraser Valley
- Sardis Doorway
- Youth Unlimited
- Matsqui, Sumas & Abbotsford Society for Community Living
- Ausome Match
- Chilliwack Bowls of Hope
- Ministry of Child + Family Development
- Empowered by Horses
- Abilities Rehab
- Fraser Health
- Families accessing services
- Families not accessing services



# Solutions

The Chilliwack Community Engagement Report underscores the Fraser Valley Child Development's (FVDC) role as a trusted community partner and collaborator in addressing the needs of children, youth, and families. By building on the strong partnerships, expanding accessible programming, and advocating for adequate funding, the FVDC and its valued partners can continue to meet the growing demand for services in Chilliwack. The commitment and collaboration shown by local partners reflect a unified effort to support the well-being of families in the area.

## Solution #01

**Ensure alignment and information-sharing among service providers, enhancing the community's response to family needs.**

Continue to convene regular collaborative meetings, similar to the Early Years and Chilliwack Child and Youth Committee (CYC), and Chilliwack Early Years Subcommittee to discuss and address emerging needs.

## Solution #02

**Reduce the need for intensive referrals and provide families with immediate support and engagement options.**

Increase access to universally accessible drop-in sessions and playgroups like the Mother Goose program.

## Solution #03

**Reduce barriers for families facing transportation challenges, particularly those living far from service centers.**

Explore options for transportation assistance or accessible locations to help families reach services.

## Solution #04

**Support a stable and skilled workforce that can handle diverse child needs and reduce crisis escalation.**

Building on the success of the CALM Early Care and Learning Framework, provide additional training for early childhood educators to manage behavioral issues related to fear, anxiety, and anger.

## Solution #05

**Help harder-to-reach families feel supported and reduce feelings of judgment or isolation when seeking services.**

Enhance resources focused on reducing stigma and providing early crisis management to support families before situations worsen.





**“FVDC’s approach makes Chilliwack feel like a community that truly cares—it’s not just about providing services but creating a sense of belonging.”**