

- Research shows that children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more likely to have mental health challenges, called “**dual diagnosis**”, which is an additional barrier to accessing support and treatment.
- Canada has agreed to follow the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1991), which says **all children and youth have the right to access the best possible health care, including mental health care.**
- In BC, there is a strong need for better and more complete mental health supports and services across different care options, including access to specialized mental health professionals.

Key Challenges

- Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) services, health authorities, and government ministries are supposed to provide **access to assessment and supports**, but no CYMH teams in BC are equipped to support children youth with dual diagnosis, and there are no specialists available.
- Developmental Disabilities Mental Health services and complex care **programs are limited** in who they serve and challenges accessing publicly funded services include:
 - Long wait times,
 - Limited services and small program sizes,
 - Restrictive criteria for referrals, and
 - Difficulties in access due to geography and eligibility.
- **Mainstream mental health services are not inclusive** and lack the staffing, resources, and training, to support children and youth with dual diagnosis.

How to Make People's Lives Better

Develop and fully fund an inclusive, fair, and culturally safe Mental Health Strategy with steps including:

- Make sure **mainstream mental health services become inclusive** of children and youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Invest in **community-based supports** across the province so they can provide timely, appropriate, and ongoing mental health supports.
- Increase **funding for early access to wellness supports** and align the roles and responsibilities of government, ministries, health authorities, crown corporations, school districts, and social service organizations to respond to people's mental health needs to ensure a continuum of care.

Position Statement: Access to Mental Health Care for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

[Technical Version](#)

[Plain Language Version](#)