
Backgrounder

Moving Forward on Child and Family Policy: Governance and Accountability Issues

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This paper provides an overview of the governance and accountability challenges that have been emerging within some Canadian jurisdictions and especially in federal-provincial relations. It explores some of the issues that have arisen as governments develop more partnerships and collaborative relationships with other governments, with non-governmental organizations, with regional and community structures, and with Aboriginal governments and communities. It begins to formulate and share best practices, and synthesizes the recommendations of participants at a CPRN roundtable on how best to move forward on policies for children and families in this changing environment.

Governments in Canada are instituting a ‘focus on results’ and becoming more interested in measuring policy performance. Several jurisdictions are using indicators of child and family well-being or ‘outcomes’ as part of this performance measurement process. Provinces are also increasing the transparency of the policy design and delivery process and some have changed their governance structures to integrate or coordinate services for children and families across government departments and ministries. Taken together, this enables all stakeholders to coordinate their actions around shared goals and objectives for children. This is especially important for voluntary sector agencies that deliver many programs and services at the community level. Efforts by government to manage interdependence – across governments and across sectors of society – suggest that Canada is inching closer to the creation of a broad-based societal strategy to support children and their families.

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