



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Is Your Child Disabled Enough?

The BC Disability Collaborative Condemns New Disability Benefit Criteria as Restrictive, Discriminatory, and Contrary to Government Promises

British Columbia, June 16, 2026 — In November 2022, Premier David Eby promised British Columbians that “Every child in BC should have the supports they need to thrive.”

Today, thousands of families are questioning whether that promise still stands.

On June 10, parents across British Columbia received notice that, to qualify for Disability Benefit funding through the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), they must demonstrate that their child requires **“intensive and sustained support across their lifespan, including possible lifelong caregiving or supervised living.”**

The BC Disability Collaborative believes these criteria establish an unreasonably high threshold that will deny support to many children and youth who need it most. Beginning April 1, 2027, the criteria will determine eligibility for direct autism funding, and **families fear they will be applied to other disability groups** as well.

The criteria set an alarmingly high threshold for eligibility, excluding many children and youth who face significant challenges and would benefit from early intervention and ongoing support. For example:

- A 7-year-old child who hits other people and occasionally runs into traffic may not be considered unsafe enough to meet the threshold.
- A teenager with a history of severe destructive behaviour who is now doing well because of the supports that she receives is likely to lose those supports because she no longer requires continuous supervision.
- A 3-year-old with delayed language skills who was recently diagnosed with autism will most likely receive no direct funding, despite decades of research demonstrating the importance and effectiveness of early intervention.

In 2022, Premier Eby also stated that the government would work collaboratively with families and partners to ensure that services work for every child. Throughout MCFD's consultations with families and stakeholders in 2024 and 2025, families consistently called for accessible, equitable, responsive supports.

They did not ask for a system that creates trauma by forcing parents to spend countless hours proving their child's worthiness for support.

They did not ask for a system that waits for children to reach a crisis before help becomes available.

Most importantly, they did not ask for a system that forces families to prove their child is "disabled enough." Yet, that is precisely what this framework will create.

The BC Disability Collaborative (BCDC) believes that the proposed Disability Benefit framework reflects a deficit-based and discriminatory approach to disability. Rather than recognizing and addressing support needs early, the model risks excluding thousands of children and youth from specialized services that help them learn, develop, participate, and thrive in their communities.

“Families were promised a system that would work for every child,” said Pat Mirenda, BCDC Chair. “Instead, they are being asked to prove the severity of their child's disability in order to access support. This approach is inequitable, short-sighted, and contrary to the principles of inclusion and prevention.”

The BC Disability Collaborative calls on the Province to:

- Immediately withdraw the proposed disability eligibility criteria.
- Convene a planning group with broad representation from the disability community, families, and service providers to co-design an equitable and effective funding framework grounded in meaningful inclusion.
- Honour the disability community principle of ‘**Nothing About Us Without Us.**’
- Fulfill the commitments made by the Premier to children, youth, and families across British Columbia.

Every child deserves the opportunity to thrive. Children should not have to prove they are disabled enough to receive support.

Families deserve better.
British Columbia can do better.

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