



Healthy Children and Families

**2014-2015
Annual
Highlights
Report**

Healthy Children and Families

Healthy Children and Families is situated within Healthy Living, Population, Public, and Aboriginal Health. The mission of the Healthy Children and Families team is to promote health and prevent disease in Albertans by using a population health approach. We target the preconception to 18 years of age population and their families.

Three teams develop and deliver initiatives: **Reproductive Health**, **Early Childhood**, and **Healthy Children and Youth**. A fourth team, **Knowledge Translation and Evaluation**, works with these three teams by providing support in program planning, evaluation, and knowledge translation.



Alberta Health Services (AHS)

Population, Public and Aboriginal Health

Healthy Living

Healthy Children and Families

Reproductive Health

Early Childhood

Healthy Children and Youth

Knowledge Translation and Evaluation

Healthy Living

Vision:

Wellness for every Albertan

Healthy Living

Mission:

To promote health and prevent disease of Albertans using a population health approach

“
We know that when children thrive, they are likely to become adults who thrive, and this contributes to the collective well-being of the province, now and into the future...The foundation for strong, healthy children is set in the early years; starting even before they are born.
 Government of Alberta
 Together We Raise Tomorrow p. 3



Population health refers to the health of a population as measured by health status indicators and as influenced by social, economic and physical environments, personal health practices, individual capacity and coping skills, human biology, early childhood development, and health services. As an approach, population health focuses on the interrelated conditions and factors that influence the health of populations over the life course, identifies systematic variations in their patterns of occurrence, and applies the resulting knowledge to develop and implement policies and actions to improve the health and well-being of those populations.

*Public Health Agency of Canada
 What is the Population Health Approach?*



Healthy Children and Families Priority Areas

Our work centres around six Strategic Priority Areas:

 Our Strategic Priority Areas	
Sexual and Reproductive Health	Promote sexual and reproductive health in school-aged children and youth, as well as among those in the preconception period.
Healthy Pregnancies and Birth Outcomes	Address factors such as nutrition, physical activity, weight, mental health, and substance use in the preconception period and during pregnancy that may negatively impact the health of families.
Breastfeeding	Promote breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity.
Early Child Development	Promote healthy child development including: physical health; communication and general knowledge; social and emotional wellbeing; and language and thinking skills.
Child and Youth Mental Health	Promote mental health among school-aged children.
Child and Youth Nutrition and Physical Activity	Promote healthy weights in children and youth by addressing modifiable factors such as nutrition, physical activity, sedentarism and mental health.

We use a population health approach to address the needs of the **preconception, maternal, infant, child and youth populations** and their families. **Primary prevention** is the main focus of the department, though some elements of **secondary prevention** are employed. We work closely with our partners in AHS, the Government of Alberta, and external stakeholders to implement a range of health promotion efforts, including universal and targeted interventions.

What We Do



Health Promotion Includes:

- Strengthening community action
- Building healthy public policy
- Creating supportive environments
- Developing personal skills
- Reorienting health services



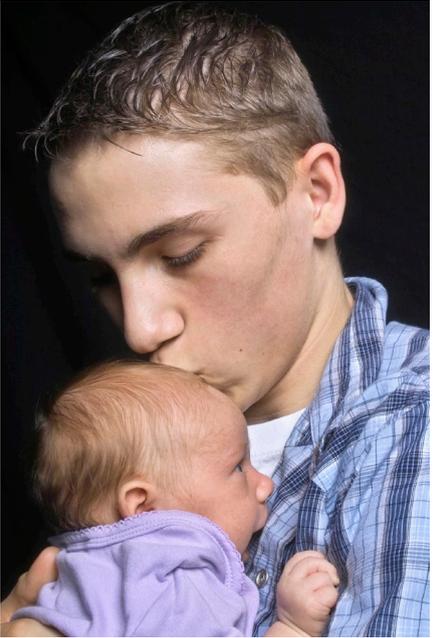


Primary Prevention:
Preventing the onset of disease by intervening to remove or reduce risk factors.





Secondary Prevention:
Detecting and addressing disease in early stages, prior to the presentation of symptoms, to stop or slow its progression.



This highlights report describes the work of the Healthy Children and Families team during 2014-2015.

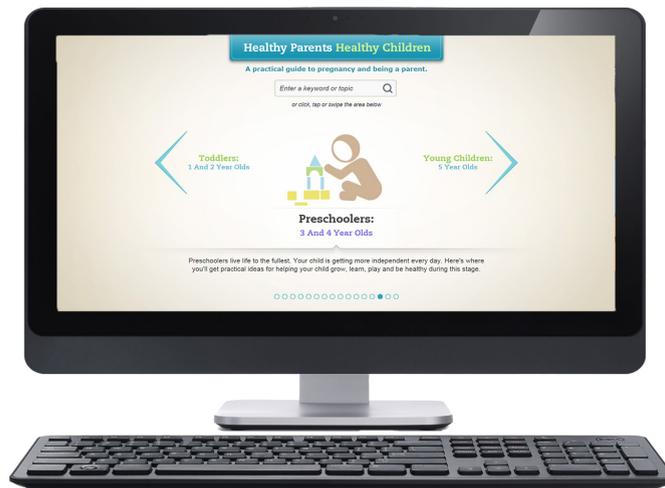
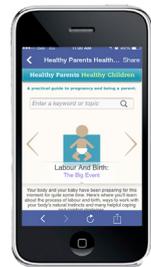
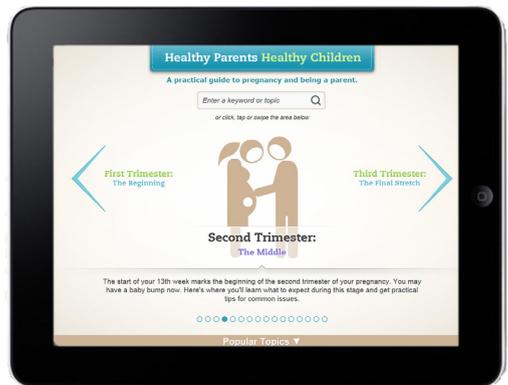
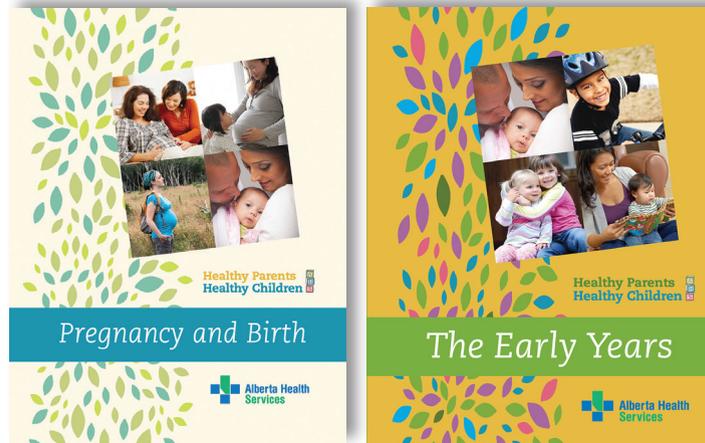
Healthy Parents, Healthy Children Resources

Healthy Parents, Healthy Children print and online products were created in 2013, in response to an identified need to have standardized pregnancy, birth and early childhood provincial resources. *Healthy Parents, Healthy Children* is a practical guide for pregnancy and being a parent. It provides comprehensive and reliable information based on evidence and best practice for expectant parents, parents of children up to 6 years of age, and health care providers who work with these families. *Healthy Parents, Healthy Children: Pregnancy and Birth* and *Healthy Parents, Healthy Children: The Early Years* print books were created in addition to an online resource with interactive components. Marketing and media strategies were implemented to promote the resources.



As of March 2015:

- ★ **63,160** book sets disseminated
- ★ **24,800** Pregnancy & Birth (single book)
- ★ **84,520** The Early Years (single book)
- ★ **153,483** visits from Alberta to the HPHC online resource



What Parents Liked Most

I was relieved to see all the information about how labour will proceed. When the actual labour started I knew what to expect.

Pictures about how something works were easy to understand.

I love to read about children('s) milestones. It's something interesting and what I enjoy with these books.

Healthy Parents Healthy Children



For more information visit: healthyparentshealthychildren.ca
To order resources visit: www.datagroup.ca/online2
User ID: healthypublic Password: healthy2013

These resources were evaluated in 2014 with the Alberta parent population, health care providers, as well as populations vulnerable to poor health outcomes. Findings showed that the *Healthy Parents, Healthy Children* resources were well received by all audiences. Improvements are being implemented on an ongoing basis.



Among parents who had received at least one book or visited the online resource, **50%** reported a change in behaviour as a result of reading the resources.



What Parents Did Differently

I started to walk when I was pregnant and I keep walking every day now.

I have positioned my baby very specifically during play to help with head shape.

I have started reading, singing and copying my baby's noises to help promote his learning and development.

Facilitating the Comprehensive School Health Approach

Comprehensive School Health is an internationally recognized approach to building healthy school communities. It works to improve health and education outcomes among school-aged children and youth.

Health Promotion Coordinators from Healthy Children and Families support Alberta school jurisdictions in using the Comprehensive School Health approach to improve healthy eating, active living, and positive mental health.

The team works with school jurisdictions and community partners to:

- facilitate school health assessments and the development of action plans
- support health champions and school jurisdiction staff
- support the development and implementation of health and wellness policies
- promote the implementation of the *Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth*
- offer professional learning opportunities and health and wellness resources
- build community connections
- support schools to obtain funding for health programs or projects
- create, evaluate, and distribute standardized resources

Every school jurisdiction in Alberta has an AHS staff member assigned to support Comprehensive School Health. The team has an extensive reach within the school community, health and education sectors, and community-based organizations.

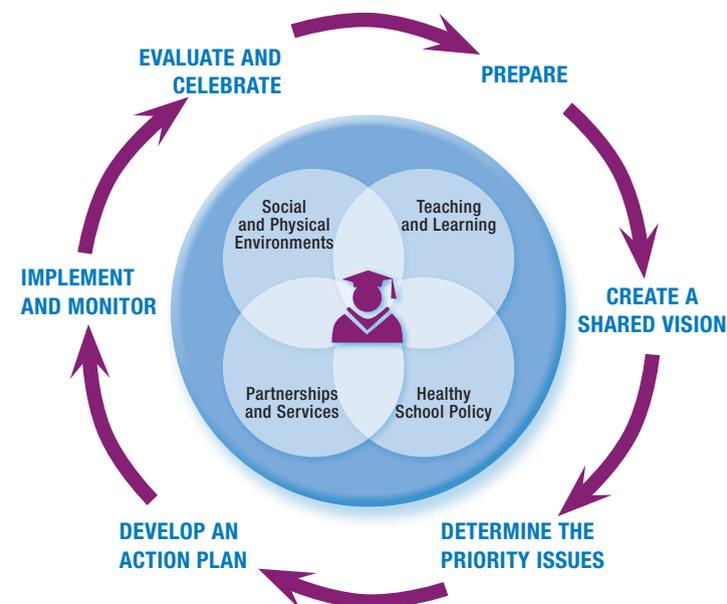


In 2014 - 2015...

The Healthy Children and Youth team:

- ★ Worked with 368 community partners
- ★ Reached 544,912 students in 1538 Alberta schools

The creation of healthy school communities is best achieved by taking coordinated action to address the four pillars of Comprehensive School Health. Over 80% of school jurisdictions in Alberta that our team worked with took action in all four pillars.



For more information about Comprehensive School Health and resources for teachers and school administrators, visit: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/csh.asp>



Among 12-19 year old Albertans:*

- ★ **19%** are overweight or obese
- ★ **29%** are considered inactive
- ★ **37%** report eating vegetables or fruit 5 or more times per day

Between **65% and 75%** of Alberta students in Grades **6-10** reported that they have experienced bullying.†

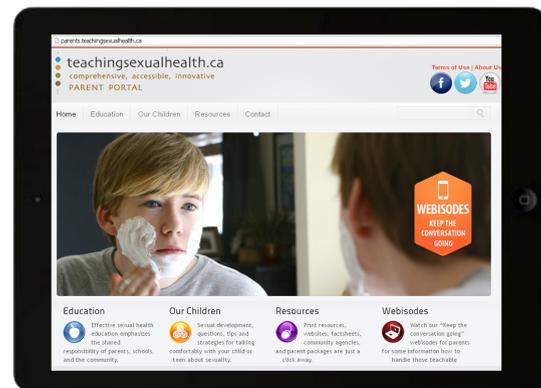
*Canadian Community Health Survey, 2012
†Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, 2011

Teaching Sexual Health Website

The Teaching Sexual Health Initiative was developed to support teachers, educators, and parents in teaching sexual health. The online resource includes both teacher and parent portals.

Sexual health is an important and lifelong aspect of personal health and social wellbeing. Evidence shows that comprehensive sexual health education greatly reduces the likelihood youth will engage in risky sexual behaviours, provides them with the information and skills to make healthy informed-decisions, as well as prevent sexually transmitted infections and unintended pregnancy. This is especially important in a province that has higher rates of sexually transmitted infections than the rest of the country.

teachingsexualhealth.ca
comprehensive, accessible, innovative



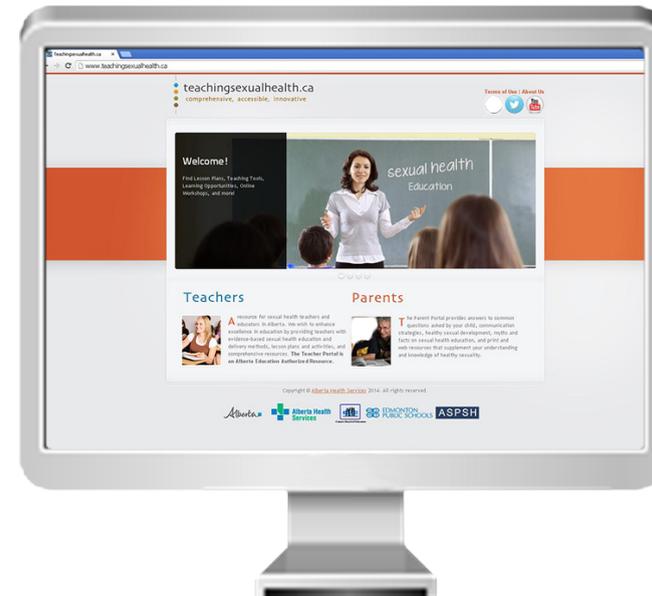
In Alberta:

- ★ About **20%** of Grade 9 and 10 students and **44%** of 15-19 year olds reported **having had sexual intercourse***
- ★ **70%** of sexually active 15-19 year olds reported that they **usually use contraception***
- ★ Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted infection for the 12-19 year old population with rates of Chlamydia **four times higher for girls** than boys†

**Canadian Community Health Survey, 2012
†Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children, 2011*



The **teacher portal** is an Alberta Education authorized education resource that includes information and teaching strategies for public school teachers and educators to increase their knowledge, comfort, and capacity to teach the human sexuality curriculum. Free **teacher workshops** are also available. Lesson plans are available in English and French.



The **parent portal** was created to provide parents with information, resources and strategies to complement what is being taught to their child in the classroom. Parents can find information about the Alberta curriculum, stages of child development, tips on how to talk with their children about sexual health, links to reliable community agencies, resources, and webisodes to help keep the conversations going.



In 2014-15 Teaching Sexual Health had . . .

- ★ **4** online teacher workshops for **87** public school teachers
- ★ **202,584** visits to teachingsexualhealth.ca from Alberta
- ★ **240,581** lesson plans downloaded from around the world
- ★ **3,365** parent packages downloaded

For more information visit <http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca>

Standardization of Healthy Pregnancy Weight Gain Resources & Tools

This project was developed to promote healthy pregnancy weight gain among Albertan women. Gestational weight gain, if not within the recommended range, can negatively impact both maternal and infant outcomes. The goals of this project include increasing knowledge and awareness of the gestational weight gain guidelines with health care providers and pregnant women. Standardized resources and tools were developed and disseminated across Alberta.

An evaluation completed in 2014, following implementation, identified that further support for appropriate weight gain during pregnancy is needed for all women. Both health care providers and women need to be aware of the guidelines and have access to the tools and resources.



In Alberta:

- ★ 42% of women were overweight or obese before becoming pregnant[†]
- ★ 52% exceeded the weight gain guidelines[†]
- ★ 9% of babies were born large for gestational age^{*}

[†]Alberta Health Services, 2012

^{*}Alberta Health, 2014

For more information visit:
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page12568.aspx>
To order resources visit: www.datagroup.ca/online2
User ID: healthypublic Password: healthy2013



Resources are available for health care providers, including:

- ★ Singleton weight gain graphs
- ★ Key messages
- ★ A Body Mass Index calculator wheel

Additionally, resources are available for pregnant women, including:

- ★ Print and online resources
- ★ An online gestational weight gain tracking tool



Standardization of Childhood Growth Measurement

A standardized approach to child growth measurement is the foundation to understanding childhood growth and development.

The goal of this initiative was to work with AHS partners to create a standardized growth measurement program for infants, preschoolers, and children up to age 18. A standardized provincial protocol and resources were developed to ensure consistent child growth measurement in public health and clinical settings. This will support the development of a childhood growth surveillance system in future years.



A variety of resources and communications are available, including:

- ★ Protocol and training resources
- ★ Step-by-step measurement technique posters for children of different ages
- ★ Promotional material to bring awareness to health care providers

For more information visit: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca>
Search "Childhood Growth Measurement"
To order resources visit: www.datagroup.ca/online2
User ID: healthypublic Password: healthy2013



An evaluation conducted in 2014 identified that there was widespread awareness and implementation of the Childhood Growth Measurement protocol at public health sites across the province. All surveyed sites were aware of the protocol and compliance with most of the procedures was extremely high. Future work will address challenges that were identified by respondents.



Breastfeeding Education

The protection, promotion, and support for breastfeeding are a priority for AHS. To support this priority, Healthy Children and Families completed literature reviews and a provincial environmental scan. Recommendations were made, including the development of educational supports for health care providers.

Working with provincial stakeholders, two online education modules targeting perinatal health care providers across Alberta are being developed. The Alberta Perinatal Health Program hosts the first module, *Breastfeeding Foundations* as part of perinatal health learning modules called STORC (Strategies for Teaching Obstetrics to Rural and Urban Caregivers). The Breastfeeding modules provide consistent, evidence- and practice-informed education about breastfeeding. The second module will be completed Summer 2015.



The **Breastfeeding Foundations** module is available online and can be accessed via link below. The website includes an orientation to assist with registering for and accessing the STORC modules: <http://aphp.dapasoft.com/>

Safe Infant Sleep Policy & Resources

The Safe Infant Sleep Initiative was established in 2009 to address concerns about sudden infant death syndrome and the risk factor of bed-sharing.

Its purpose was to promote safe infant sleep by creating key messages, resources for health care providers and families, and an AHS Safe Infant Sleep policy. The Policy provides direction that ensures consistent Safe Sleep practices are in place across AHS. It came into effect in January 2014. Ongoing quality improvement activities have been undertaken, as well as an interim evaluation.



For more information and resources visit: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page13568.aspx>

Strategic Action Planning

Healthy Children and Families developed a Strategic Action Plan to inform the development, implementation, and evaluation of projects and initiatives for the team going forward. The Strategic Action Plan will help to ensure that teams within Healthy Children and Families work synergistically towards common goals.

Our first task in developing the Strategic Action Plan was to complete a review of the Healthy Children and Families mandate and the strategic directions that guide the work of the teams.

A Health Status Assessment was then completed to identify the needs of the population, followed by a review of approaches to affect change in the population.

Consultation with key stakeholders including our own staff and managers, medical officers of health, and leaders from other portfolios and zones then followed, to obtain context and input from those we work with now and will continue to work with going forward.



We are using this information, together with stakeholder input, to develop detailed, three year action plans for each of our teams. Some of our key future initiatives include:

- ★ Postpartum depression screening standardization in public health settings
- ★ Well child clinic standardization
- ★ A teaching sexual health public awareness campaign
- ★ Preconception health public awareness campaign



Healthy children emerge most often from healthy families, and healthy families are in turn promoted by healthy communities.

*Government of Canada (2011)
The Well-being of Canada's Young Children, p.1*