

Touch our Future



Development of a Population-Based Child and Youth Data Laboratory in Alberta

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ALBERTA CENTRE FOR
CHILD, FAMILY & COMMUNITY
RESEARCH



The Concept

- ◆ Data related to Alberta's children reside in a number of Ministries
- ◆ Insights require putting the data together to allow for research on policies, programs, services, etc.
- ◆ CYDL is intended to provide government policy makers with improved capacity to access and use better information for research, analysis and decision making.
 - ◆ Brings multiple child serving ministries together
 - ◆ Share data and create information
 - ◆ Pursue research priorities:
 - not a data warehouse, but a facility to identify research areas, bring relevant data together, conduct productive research, and develop insights



Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research

- A Non-for-profit corporation established in 2003
- Primarily funded by Alberta Children and Youth Services
- Core Functions:
 - Identify Policy Research Priorities and Opportunities for Collaboration
 - Support Excellent Research and Evaluation in Priority Themes
 - Knowledge Mobilization and Communications
 - Build Trans-Disciplinary and Cross-Sectoral Research Capacity
 - Efficient Management of Resources to Build Sustainability
 - Child and Youth Data Lab: Build Data and Research Capacity, Manage Data Access and Use, and Conduct Cross-Sectoral Research



Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research

Five Key Themes Identified in The Centre's Initial Grant Funding:

- Early Childhood Development
- Successful Transitions for Youth
- Family Capacity Building
- Community Capacity Building
- Longitudinal Data Capacity



Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research

Vision

- Improve the well-being of children, their families and communities in Alberta, Canada and internationally, by mobilizing research evidence into policy and practice.

Mission

- Develop, support and integrate research across sectors and disciplines to provide a strong, evidence-based foundation for identifying and promoting effective public policy and service delivery to improve the well-being of children, families and communities in Alberta, Canada and internationally.

Our Goal

- That The Centre is recognized as being the global leader in mobilizing priority research findings in childhood well-being.



CYDL

- ◆ An innovative way of bringing together government administrative data to allow for research on policies, programs, and services cross government sectors – better use of data and value-added
 - Population based
 - Cross-sectoral/cross-ministry
 - Longitudinal – prospective and retrospective
- ◆ Focusing on well-being of the child and youth population
- ◆ Working with ministries to identify policy relevant research priorities
- ◆ Bringing relevant data together – anonymized/de-identified linkable data
- ◆ Conducting productive research and developing insights



The Leadership Role of the Centre

- ◆ The design of the CYDL itself represents a number of strategic and operational innovations.
 - ◆ Creating effective collaborative governance mechanisms to support the needs of multiple Ministries; the adoption of a ‘facilitation’ approach (rather than seeking to control and manage multi-Ministry data resources);
 - ◆ The unique positioning of The Centre as being outside of government yet closely linked as well as being a neutral organization;
 - ◆ Creating the technical and human capacity to integrate unique data from multiple sources while ensuring data security, protection and privacy.



Steps in Developing the Child and Youth Data Laboratory

- Focused on the key policy leadership group, The Alberta Child and Youth Initiative
- The concept of the data lab was originally taken to the partnering deputies in November 2005. The partnering ministries supported the concept and requested a detailed implementation plan and budget
- Start-up funding was received in March 2007 and a formal partnership agreement with the nine child-serving ministries was signed in June 2007



Alberta Child and Youth Initiative

- Introduced in 1998, the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI) is a **collaborative partnership of government ministries** working together on issues affecting children and youth.
- Its **vision** ensures that Alberta's children and youth are well cared for, safe, successful at learning, and healthy.
- Children and youth issues cross many government ministries. A coordinated government-wide effort is critical for the effective and efficient support of children, youth and their families. Working together, government ministries and communities can more effectively address these issues.
- The ACYI provides a forum for dealing with children and youth issues from a broad-based perspective by using the expertise of the partnering ministries, communities, and Aboriginal people in developing strategies and initiatives. Strategies provide practical opportunities for organizations and individuals to work together for children, youth and their families.



Partnering Ministries

- ◆ Alberta Children and Youth Services
- ◆ Alberta Education
- ◆ Alberta Health and Wellness
- ◆ Alberta Justice and Public Security
- ◆ Alberta Solicitor General and Attorney General
- ◆ Alberta Advanced Education and Technology
- ◆ Alberta Employment and Immigration
- ◆ Alberta Aboriginal Relations
- ◆ Alberta Seniors and Community Support

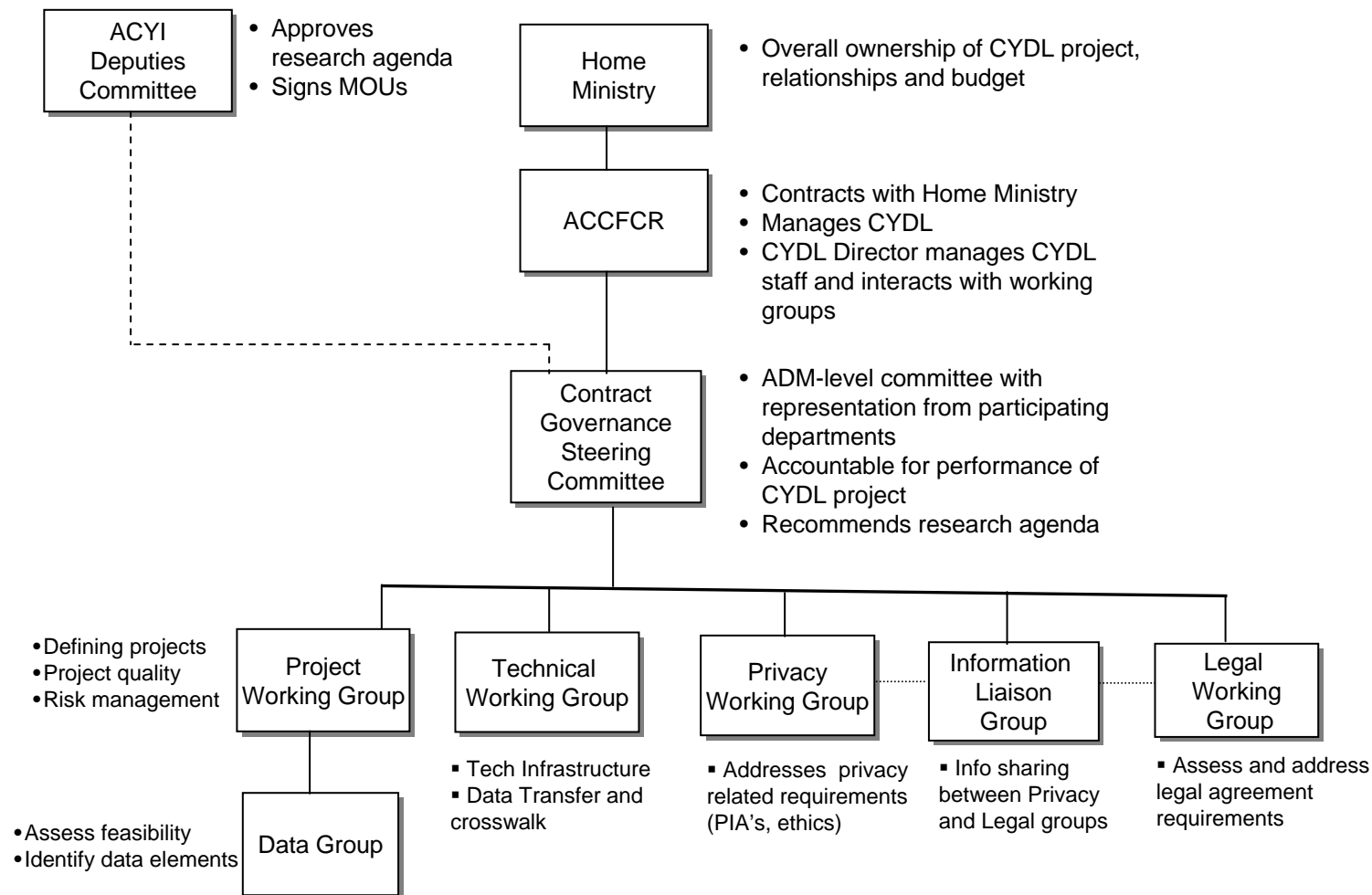


Governance

- ◆ Guide the overall direction of the initiative
- ◆ Give voice to each Ministry
- ◆ Provide a forum for setting research priorities
- ◆ Provide mechanism for project approval
- ◆ Achieve commitment and participation from partnering departments
- ◆ Facilitate the establishment of data sharing agreements
- ◆ Provide oversight of ethics/risk management



CYDL Governance Structure





Immediate Benefits

- ◆ Research for multi-departmental evidence-based decision-making
- ◆ New perspectives on cohort behaviour
- ◆ New insights into cause and effect
- ◆ Ability to evaluate cumulative impact of service effectiveness and design
- ◆ Input into large policy questions
- ◆ Ability to create longitudinal perspectives, leading to insights and better decisions
- ◆ Pathfinder for other projects
- ◆ Improved outcomes



Clients and Partners

◆ Service Focus:

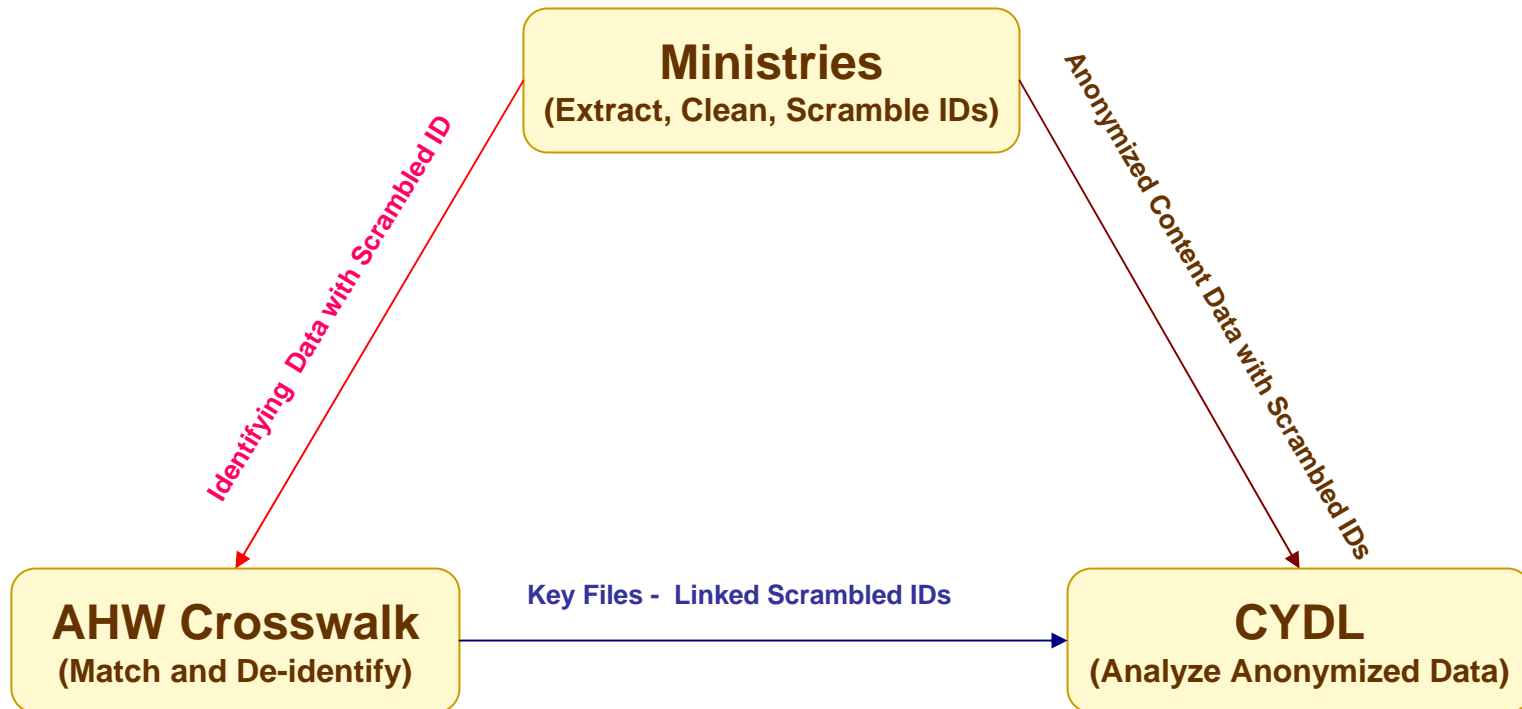
- ◆ Primary focus is internal GoA
- ◆ Later, outside academic can be added

◆ Roles and Responsibilities

- ◆ Ministries hold and provide own data
 - staff are involved in each research project that uses their data
- ◆ CYDL conducts the research and facilitates the process
- ◆ AHW creates the data match (Crosswalk)



Data Process



Notes: Scrambled ID - Personal identification numbers such Alberta Student ID or Personal Health Number are scrambled so that it is unique but not identifiable.



Progress so far

- Ministries committed and funding agreement signed
- Funding in place
- Governance structure in place
- First two projects identified and approved
- Data Sharing Agreement and Privacy Impact Assessment are under development
- Physical space established and some staff positions filled (more needed)
- IT infrastructure implementation is close to production



What Will We Achieve In Five Years (*Or Less*)

- ◆ Establishment of CYDL infrastructure, staffing and processes
- ◆ Matching of child-related data across ACYI Ministries (Crosswalk)
- ◆ Completion of 18 major research projects
- ◆ Creation of information asset for the Government of Alberta
- ◆ Demonstration of process and value created

Touch our Future



What Are the First Two Projects?



First Project: What are the experiences of youth in Alberta in 2007?

- The project will describe the population of youth in 2007 to better understand the characteristics of youth who received services that were relevant to partnering ministries.
- This cross-sectional descriptive study will provide for the first time an overall picture of how and to what extent Albertan youth receive and utilize services (health, social services) across child serving ministries.
- We will focus on mental health status, education attainment and social economic status.
- We will identify and quantify the pattern of service utilization among youth who for example are with severe mental health problems and/or are with poor school performances.
- We will also assess the degree to which these youth overlap in their service use across ministries so that the most vulnerable youth population can be characterized.
- There is a paucity of this unique and important information as no one ministry will have sufficient/complete data to accurately describe the youth population along these dimensions.



Second Project: What experiences occur in the years prior to unfortunate life events among youth in Alberta?

- The project will describe longitudinal experiences of youth who have unfortunate life events and how these events relate to poor outcomes.
- For example, a retrospective longitudinal examination of children who drop out of high school (defined as a poor outcome), may reveal a broad spectrum of antecedents and pathways that led to the poor outcome and also point to opportunities lost for effective intervention.
- This poor outcome maybe a function of poor health, mental health problems, low SES, poor cognitive skills (prolonged poor educational outcomes) or a function of early childhood maltreatment, entry into the child protection system and repeated and escalating contact with the justice system (drug related arrests etc).



The Role of The Centre

- ◆ The Centre recognizes the importance of accessing quality information through the analysis of existing government data resources. The need to ensure the participation of multiple ministries is an important contributor to the development of strong evidence-based policy capacity within the GOA.
- ◆ The Centre is a strategic leader in the field of evidence-based policy development and decision making.
- ◆ Combined with The Centre's focus on supporting policy design and decision making, the analysis and synthesis of administrative data of The CYDL is a major enhancement to advancing knowledge generation, transfer and mobilization continuum of evidence-based decision making.
- ◆ The Centre's leadership in designing and developing CYDL is a further demonstration of its growing reputation as a public sector innovation.