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New programs promote better health for children and youth

Edmonton... More than \$30 million in funding for seven new programs will help put children and youth on a path to lifelong health. These initiatives include a screening program to detect conditions in newborns, programs to promote healthy weights and an award for healthy school communities.

"Children's health is an important priority for this government," said Iris Evans, Minister of Health and Wellness. "These initiatives will expand the work we are doing to give children a healthy start in life, from screening for a range of metabolic disorders in newborns, to helping children learn what they need to do to grow up to be healthy adults."

These initiatives, which are budgeted at \$30.6 million over three years, include:

Screening:

Pre-school Developmental Screening (\$3 million per year over three years)

The program will fund at least three demonstration projects to encourage innovative approaches to screen, assess and provide intervention to preschool children with learning and developmental delays.

Newborn Metabolic Screening (\$1.67 million year one and \$865,000 for each of the next two years)

The current newborn metabolic screening program will be expanded to screen for [13 additional metabolic conditions](#) in newborns, as well as cystic fibrosis. Alberta will be the first province in Canada screening all newborns for cystic fibrosis.

Healthy Weights:

Regional Health Promotion Coordinators for Healthy Weights (\$2.7 million per year over three years)

Funding will be available to health regions for health promotion professionals to facilitate innovative community-based approaches to promote healthy weights for children and youth.

Child and Youth Nutrition Guidelines (\$500,000)

Guidelines will be developed to help organizations and facilities offer healthy food choices for youth and children.

Healthy Weights Social Marketing Campaign (\$2 million per year over three years)

Targeted strategies, initiatives and a campaign to increase awareness and positively influence healthy eating and active living behaviours among children and youth.

Wellness Fund for Healthy School Communities (\$1 million per year)

The program will support innovative initiatives that promote healthy living in school communities.

Healthy School Communities Award (\$200,000 annually)

An awards program will be developed to recognize healthy living initiatives in school communities.

These initiatives support the Alberta government's 'Getting on With Better Health Care' package released in the summer of 2005.

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