

FACT SHEET: EIBI (early intensive behavioural intervention)

In brief:

- Autism is rising in all countries (unclear why). BC has [over 5,000 children & youth](#) under age 18
- EIBI: a proven approach to autism treatment that works well for some children – not all need it.
- EIBI is currently offered to 75 children under age six in seven BC communities.
- This short-term, life-changing treatment costs \$60,000 a year & saves far more in the long run.
- Cancelling EIBI programs won't stop the dramatic rise in BC's budget for autism treatment.
- Cancelling EIBI will exact an enormous human toll on families, plus a steep economic toll.
- Premier Campbell promised to build the best system of supports for children with special needs in Canada. BC health professionals say cutting autism funding & EIBI programs is bad for kids.
- Despite a higher deficit, Alberta continues fund up to \$60,000 for every child with autism up to age 18, for a total autism budget that is more than twice ours in BC.

BC Autism Facts

- Incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is rising in BC and globally – it's unclear why.
- ASD is a spectrum disorder, with varying symptoms and intensity. Clinical management is complex and treatment needs vary, as do individual responses to different treatments. Not every child needs EIBI.
- BC serves over 5,000 children with ASD (~ 700 < age 6). Waitlists for diagnosis are long in some areas.

What is EIBI?

- Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention is an interdisciplinary model of intensive one-to-one therapy targeted to reduce specific symptoms in children with ASD.
- In 2001, MCFD (Children's Ministry) started funding EIBI programs after successful family court actions.
- BC Liberals put EIBI programs on hold when they took office in 2001, contrary to pre-election promises, but relented after a family outcry and further court challenges.
- EIBI programs serve 75 children with ASD under age 6 in 7 BC communities. Hundreds of children have made huge strides in 1-2 years of treatment. But like most special needs programs, waitlists are long.
- Since 2003, an autism subsidy program has helped other BC families pay for private autism therapies chosen and managed by parents. Subsidies only partly cover costs in most cases. (Children under 6 now get up to \$22,000, while those aged 6-18 only get \$6,000)

Benefits vs. Costs

- BC's EIBI program costs (\$60,000/year per child) are typical for similar programs in Canada and the US. Unlike the subsidy program, EIBI fully covers administrative & clinical case management.
- EIBI program costs have been relatively stable since BC's programs began in 2001.
- Since 2001, MCFD's total autism budget grew from \$4.1 million to over \$40 annually.

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- Most of that increase is due to more families accessing autism subsidies. Therefore, [MCFD's plans](#) to cancel EIBI and put all families on subsidies won't control MCFD's rising autism costs.
- MCFD's rising autism budget has been offset by reductions to the generic programs that formerly served most children with special needs, including autism. The overall rise in MCFD's budget for special needs, including autism, has been modest. All programs, apart from the subsidies, have long waitlists.
- The Children's Ministry pays as much as \$150,000/year for 24/7 care contracts for children with severe autism whose families cannot manage them. Without EIBI, more families will be unable to cope.
- Lifetime costs for each individual with ASD are estimated at \$3.2 million. With effective treatment, those costs can be reduced by 65% (Source: [US National Standards Report, 2009](#)).

EIBI works!

- Decades of international research have affirmed the benefits and cost effectiveness of early intervention for children at risk for a broad range of developmental challenges.
- The groundbreaking 2009 [National Standards Report](#), a massive 4-year international research project that reviewed over 6,000 published autism studies, identified EIBI and behavioural approaches as the leading, "established" treatments for children with ASD.
- Autism can't be cured, but associated challenges can be largely mitigated in many cases.
- [MCFD admits](#) its EIBI programs are effective and that success in the subsidy program depends on parents' ability to pay extra, to select the right treatment & to provide effective admin/ clinical oversight.
- BC's [Health Sciences Association](#), representing professionals in the field, has denounced the EIBI cuts.
- Parents of children in the EIBI program overwhelmingly & strongly endorse the program's effectiveness

Dollars, Sense & Values: The Campaign to Save EIBI

MOMs and other provincial organizations have joined parents whose children have benefited from EIBI to urge the BC government to halt plans to close EIBI programs and to expand access to all who need it.

- Existing EIBI programs (\$5 million) can be maintained at no extra cost to taxpayers
- Not everyone needs EIBI. BC can easily afford to expand access to serve all who need it.
- Alberta, with a much higher deficit than BC, continues to fund up to \$60,000 in therapy for every child with autism up to age 18, at an annual cost of over \$100 million.

In 2005, Premier Campbell promised to build the best system of support in Canada for children with special needs. Cancelling EIBI programs is a betrayal of that promise.

Providing early intensive therapies for all children could save BC taxpayers billions in future costs, including education, care contracts, family respite and long-term costs of housing and supporting adults with ASD.

Lost contributions to the BC economy of thousands of parents struggling to cope with ASD are enormous. The human toll of failing to support these children by offering life-changing treatment is incalculable.

Ultimately, the BC government's decision to abandon children with ASD represents a moral failure and a betrayal of core values upheld of most British Columbians.

For more information about autism and how you can support the campaign to save EIBI, visit **Moms on the Move:** <http://momsnetwork.ca/>