
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts

NEW B.C. CENTRE TO HELP KIDS TACKLE OBESITY

VANCOUVER – A new specialized centre at BC Children’s Hospital will help reduce obesity in children and adolescents, Gordon Hogg, Minister of State for ActNow BC, announced today.

“British Columbia is one of the most physically active provinces in Canada,” said Hogg. “However, like other parts of the country, we face an increase in the number of overweight children and adolescents. The new Centre for Healthy Weights: Shapedown BC will help hundreds of children and adolescents learn new habits early and enjoy the best quality of life for many years to come. This is part of our ActNow BC commitment to support all British Columbians in making the best choices for their health and well-being.”

The centre will receive \$400,000 in annual provincial government funding from the Ministry of Health. It is based on a successful pilot program, using the Shapedown approach, which has treated over 100 children and their families from the Greater Vancouver area since 2004. The new funding means that the centre will be able to accommodate up to 200 families per year.

The Shapedown BC professional team consists of physicians, nutritionists and counsellors and integrates primary and specialist health care. Professionals at the centre will work with families of children and adolescents who are dealing with obesity and will target changes in nutrition and physical activity levels for the entire family. The centre features a clinic and a resource centre for kids.

“We are supporting programs that promote healthy living and prevent illness in our society,” said Health Minister George Abbott. “If we can address the issue of obesity in children and teach them proper lifestyle choices, we can make a real difference in their health, and in the sustainability of the entire health-care system.”

“We know children and youth don’t want to be different and they don’t want to be treated as if they are different,” said BC Children’s Hospital president Sharon Toohey. “The best thing about the Shapedown program is that patients can work as a team with their family to adopt the healthier lifestyle they need to avoid the serious consequences linked to childhood obesity.”

Shapedown, originally developed in California, has been successfully implemented in the United States for more than 20 years. The model includes group and one-on-one counselling to address the underlying causes of weight problems.

“You feel guilty as a parent because your child is overweight and can often face discrimination from peers,” said Ceri Bowles, a Shapedown family participant. “Shapedown BC is the only thing that’s worked for our daughter, who has had a weight problem for most of her life. The program has taught our entire family about healthier choices for a better life.”

ActNow BC is a strategy that integrates cross-government and multi-sector partnerships to support British Columbians in making healthy lifestyle choices. The ActNow BC goal is to lead North America in healthy living and be the healthiest jurisdiction ever to host an Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

For more information on ActNow BC, visit www.actnowbc.gov.bc.ca.

1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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