
NEWS RELEASE

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CHILD HEALTH SURVEY WRAPS UP CONVERSATION INPUT

VANCOUVER – Healthy living concerns such as obesity and eating healthy foods top the list of health issues for B.C. children aged 10 to 16 years old, according to a report presented to Health Minister George Abbott today by Child Health BC at the conclusion of the one-year public input into the Conversation on Health.

“It’s great to see that the next generation of British Columbians believe healthy eating and physical activity as a key priority and critical to the sustainability of our public health system,” said Abbott. “As we wrap up the year-long Conversation on Health, it is appropriate that our young people get the final say as the underlying message has been about ensuring a public health system that is there for our children and grandchildren.”

The report also noted that smoking and taking drugs were pinpointed by nine out of 10 children surveyed as contributors to bad health.

The report was commissioned by BC Children’s Hospital Foundation and Child Health BC, a provincewide network initiated by BC Children’s Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). It was based on research carried out by polling firm Ipsos-Reid during the past summer.

“Through BC Children’s Hospital and its innovative programs such as Child Health BC, we have a mandate to safeguard the health of B.C.’s children,” said PHSA board chair Wynne Powell. “Listening to their concerns about health helps ensure our activities support their efforts to lead healthy lives. The lifestyles they establish today will have great bearing on the demands on the health-care system of tomorrow.”

British Columbian children aged 10 to 16 years old were asked to name their top health concerns, what they thought contributes to good health and bad health, obstacles to achieving or maintaining good health and who is responsible for their health. They were also asked to gauge their own level of health.

Children identified exercise, diet and sleep as the top three contributors to good health. Eighty per cent of children surveyed said being overweight, not exercising regularly, drinking alcohol and eating unhealthy foods as contributing to bad health. Nine out of 10 children identified smoking and taking drugs as contributors to poor health while 43 per cent of children and youth felt that the primary responsibility for good health was their own.

“We made sure we heard from kids across B.C.,” said Dr. Robert Peterson, director of Child Health BC. “Our goal is to ensure all of B.C.’s kids have equitable access to a consistent standard of pediatric care, and achieving this goal requires that the communication goes two ways. No one has a better understanding of the concerns of youth than youth themselves.”

Thousands of British Columbians joined the year-long Conversation on Health, making it the single largest public discussion on health in B.C. history. The Conversation on Health officially ends on Sept. 30, 2007, a year after it was launched by Premier Gordon Campbell on Sept. 28, 2007. The most recent statistics show:

- 6,621 registrations for the forums;
- 4,427 phone calls;
- 1,645 emails;
- 533 letters;
- 5,727,555 web hits.

“People of all ages throughout the province have made the Conversation on Health the largest ever public consultation on health held in B.C.,” said Mary Polak, Parliamentary Secretary to the Conversation on Health and MLA for Langley. “This year-long initiative has focused on gathering the views of British Columbians from all walks of life on how to improve and review B.C.’s public health system.”

All input received will be summarized in a report that will be presented to government later this fall. The report will help guide new programs, services and legislation for B.C.’s health system, in accordance with the principles of the Canada Health Act, and criteria such as improved patient care and accountability.

Child Health BC is a collaborative network of the Provincial Health Services Authority involving all of the provinces regional health authorities, including Fraser Health, Interior Health, Northern Health, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver Island Health Authority. Child Health BC is an initiative of BC Children's Hospital and its lead benefactor is the Overwaitea Food Group.

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