

A Trauma-Informed Analysis of Child & Youth Policies in Québec

This policy information sheet is part of a series created by the Practice and Policy Analysis committee within the Canadian Consortium on Child and Youth Trauma (CCCYT). Practice and Policy Analysis is **one of seven** projects led by the CCCYT. We explore how trauma-informed care is reflected in policies and practices across Canada.

About the CCCYT

The CCCYT is a partnership that brings together more than 100 members, including researchers, professionals, and organizations from various sectors of child, youth, and family services. Together, we work to improve social responses to child and youth trauma, given 34.4% of Canadian adults have reported experiencing child abuse.¹

Towards this goal, we have created this policy information sheet, with the aim to:

- 1) **Map the policies** that have been made to protect children and youth and support their well-being in the province of Québec, Canada
- 2) **Analyze whether these policies** reflect trauma-informed care principles

So, why is a trauma-informed approach **important** in policy?

A trauma-informed approach means creating policies that reflect an understanding of trauma and its impacts. Exposure to trauma (e.g., abuse, neglect, family dysfunction, and/or violence) is linked to challenges in emotional regulation, brain development, and social-relational capacities.^{2,3,4} These impacts are often cumulative, with risk increasing with each experience. The impact of trauma is not only personal, but economic. The most recent estimate of the annual cost of child abuse in Canada is around \$23 billion.⁵

This approach is important because the **children and youth most impacted by trauma are often the ones these policies are meant to protect.**

Looking at policy through a trauma-informed lens helps us to limit the potential for more harm, and instead build safety and long-term well-being. It is both a compassionate and cost-effective approach to policy making.

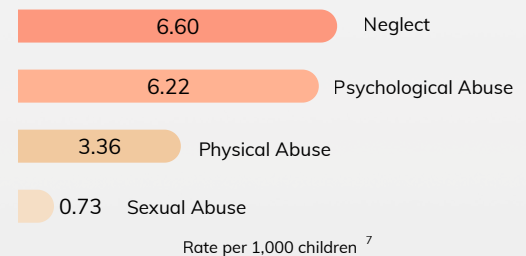


Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is an approach used in services, policies, and workplaces at all levels of government and organizations since the early 2000s, with growing adoption across sectors in the past decade. It helps make sure that children, youth, and the professionals supporting them who have experienced trauma feel safe, supported and are not re-traumatized.



As of 2021, there are **1,604,195** children (0-17 years) living in Québec⁶

Investigations by type of maltreatment in Québec (2019)



For every **1,000** children in Québec, there are:

9.48

children living in out-of-home care, as of 2022 (e.g., foster care, kinship, group homes)⁶

What are policies and why do they matter?

Policies are rules or plans that guide how things are done. They exist at different levels of government or within organizations. Provincial and territorial policies are especially important because they help shape how services like health care, education, and child protection are delivered, funded and how important issues are handled.

In Québec, many policies begin as Bills and follow the process shown to the right.

For more information on how policies become enforced into law in Québec, [click here](#).

Methodology

1 We hand-searched Québec's laws catalogue and read the preamble of each Act

2 Acts were included if their purpose was relevant to children or youth's well-being or protection as outlined in the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).⁸

- This convention states that children (ages 0-18) have fundamental human rights, like the right to health, education and protection from harm. These rights are equally important, and Canada has a responsibility to uphold them at all times. These rights are often interconnected and therefore the policies here may touch on multiple rights (e.g., best interest of the child is explicitly mentioned in many Acts).

3 We searched each included Act for mention of trauma and trauma-informed care as well as any terms related to the key principles of TIC, as described by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.⁹ For Québec, we translated the search terms to French and searched the French legislation to ensure the search was comprehensive. For a list of all exact terms used, [click here](#).

The TIC principles are:

- Safety
- Empowerment, Voice & Choice
- Collaboration & Mutuality
- Cultural, Historical or Gender Issues
- Trust and Transparency
- Peer Support

There are **limitations** that should be kept in mind as you read through this information sheet.

- We offer a point-in-time look at the Acts current up until **December 31, 2025**. As Acts evolve over time, caution should be used when interpreting this sheet at a later date.
- While Acts may not specifically use the term searched, they may endorse the principles that reflect trauma-informed care.



Bills

A Bill is like a draft of a new law or a proposed change to an existing one. It's introduced to lawmakers for discussion and debate.



Acts

When a bill is approved, it becomes an Act. Acts are bills that have been accepted and passed by the government, turning them into official laws.




Practice Guidelines

Although practice guidelines are not laws, they are important tools because they guide how laws are put into practice.





Mapping the Existing Acts in Québec



UN Rights	Act Name (Year) 	Act Description
Best Interest of the Child	<u>Act Respecting the Commissioner for Children's Well-Being and Rights</u> (2024)	This Act describes the government's responsibility to protect children's (<18 years) rights, safety and listen to their opinions. This is done by assigning a commissioner to look after all children's well-being in Québec. ¹⁰
	<u>Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms</u> (1975)	This Act is about protecting the basic rights, dignity, and equality of all people, including children. Specifically, This Act says children have a right to protection, security, education. ¹¹
	<u>Civil Code of Québec</u> (1991)	This Act protects children's safety, rights and interests in several ways. It ensures children born from sexual violence receive financial support, allows them to challenge or make decisions about the offender's parental rights, and gives children the right to change the sex assigned to them at birth. ¹²
Children who are Adopted	<u>Act to Implement the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption</u> (2006)	This Act ensures that adoptions respect the best interests of the child, that their identity is preserved and that the adoption is free from, abuse, trafficking, or illegal adoption. ¹³
Children with Disabilities	<u>Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights with a View to Achieving Social, School and Workplace Integration</u> (2004)	This Act is about protecting the rights of all people with disabilities, including children by promoting their full participation in society. It requires governments to remove barriers towards integration in school, work, and community life. ¹⁴
Health, Water, Food, Environment	<u>Act Respecting the Protection of Persons whose Mental State Presents a Danger to Themselves or to Others</u> (1997)	This Act describes the admission and treatment processes that must be followed when anyone, including minors, become a patient in a health care system. ¹⁵
	<u>Act to Establish the Cultural Safety Approach within the Health and Social Services Network</u> (2024)	This Act recognizes that First Nations and Inuit Peoples, including their children, have unique cultures and histories and need health and social services that respect and protect them. ¹⁶
	<u>Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion</u> (2002)	This Act describes the creation of a national strategy on poverty and social exclusion, focused on the social, cultural and economic development of individuals, families and their children. ¹⁷

Mapping the Existing Acts in Québec



UN Rights	Act Name (Year) 	Act Description
Protection from Kidnapping	<u>Act Respecting the Civil Aspects of International and Interprovincial Child Abduction</u> (1984)	This Act helps protect children (<16 years) from being taken or kept in another province or country without permission. ¹⁸
Protection from Violence	<u>Act to Counter Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images</u> (2024)	This Act allows anyone, including minors (>14 years), to stop or prevent the sharing of private intimate images without their consent in order to protect their dignity, privacy, and reputation. ¹⁹
	<u>Act to Protect Persons from Conversion Therapy Provided to Change their Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Gender Expression</u> (2020)	This Act is about protecting all persons regardless of age from injuries as a result of conversion therapy, which is a harmful practice that threatens a person's dignity, integrity and identity. ²⁰
	<u>Youth Protection Act</u> (1979)	This Act allows the Director of Youth Protection to help children (< 18 years) who are being abused, neglected, or need protection. ²¹ The Public Health Agency of Canada highlights key information about this Act here . ²² 
Recovery and Reintegration	<u>Act Respecting the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux</u> (1985)	This Act says the Minister of Health and Social Services must provide support for children and families in vulnerable situations, prevent risks to a child's safety or development, and help young people under 26 who were under youth protection transition to adulthood. ²³
	<u>Act to Assist Persons who are Victims of Criminal Offences and to Facilitate their Recovery</u> (2021)	This Act helps protect people in Québec, including children, who have been hurt by crime. It gives them the right to support or financial assistance. ²⁴
	<u>Act to Authorize the Communication of Personal Information to the Families of Indigenous Children who Went Missing or Died after Being Admitted to an Institution</u> (2021)	This Act promotes the acknowledgement of harms done to Indigenous children, by allowing communication of personal information to families when their children have disappeared or died under Government care. ²⁵

Trauma-Informed Analysis

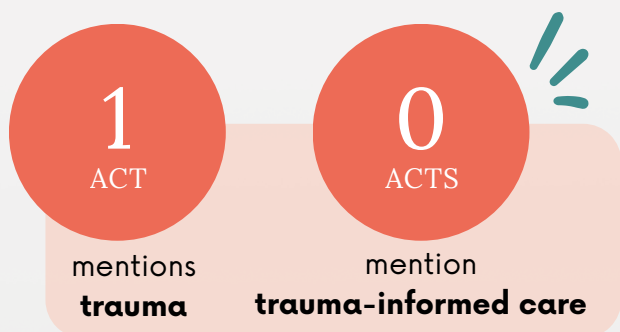
The table below highlights how Acts in Québec endorse the **six** key principles of trauma-informed care, such as safety, empowerment, and trust.

How to interpret:

- ✓ means the Act includes at least one key term related to the principle
- X means no key terms related to the principle appear
- The colours show how often those key terms pop up across the Act

■ More than 10x
 ■ Less than 10x
 ■ None

Act	Trauma-Informed Care Principle					
	Safety	Empowerment, Voice, Choice	Collaboration & Mutuality	Cultural, Historical or Gender Issues	Trust & Transparency	Peer Support
Act to Assist Persons who are Victims of Criminal Offences and to Facilitate their Recovery	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Act to Authorize the Communication of Personal Information to the Families of Indigenous Children who went Missing or Died after being Admitted to an Institution	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Act to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Act to Counter Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Images	✓	✓	X	X	X	X
Act to Establish the Cultural Safety Approach within the Health and Social Services Network	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X
Act to Implement the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Act to Protect Persons from Conversion Therapy Provided to Change their Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Gender Expression	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X
Act Respecting the Civil Aspects of International and Interprovincial Child Abduction	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
Act Respecting the Commissioner for Children's Well-Being and Rights	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Act Respecting the Ministère de la Santé et des Services Sociaux	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
Act Respecting the Protection of Persons whose Mental State Presents a Danger to Themselves or to Others	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X
Act to Secure Handicapped Persons in the Exercise of their Rights with a View to Achieving Social, School and Workplace Integration	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Civil Code of Quebec	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
Youth Protection Act	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X



While many of the Acts have been created to support children and youth who are most impacted by trauma, **only one** explicitly mentions trauma (Youth Protection Act), but **none** mention trauma-informed care.

What **influences** the content and implementation of policies?

Provincial Bills




Bills, when assented into law, can trigger changes to existing Acts. As a result, Acts are continuously evolving with amendments for the removal or addition of new definitions, clauses and sections.

For example, Bill 15 (*An Act to Amend the Youth Protection Act and Other Legislative Provisions*), was accepted in April 2022 and proposed various amendments to the *Youth Protection Act*.²⁶ One such amendment was the addition of 'exposure to domestic violence' as a reason a child may be considered in danger and thus, exposure to domestic violence became reasonable grounds for intervention.

Provincial Practice Guidelines

Unlike Bills, practice guidelines, such as frameworks or action plans, do not change existing Acts. Instead, they act as a bridge between policy and practice, showing workers how to apply an Act in their daily work. Although this series does not examine these types of documents, it is possible that trauma and TIC are referenced more explicitly in here than in legislation. There may also be variation in the ways workers use Acts in practice.

Examples of practice guidelines in Québec include:

-  The **Manuel de référence sur la protection de la jeunesse** supports workers in carrying out the *Youth Protection Act*.²⁷
-  The **Repérage et analyse de situations d'enfants exposés à la violence conjugale** assists practitioners to identify and respond to domestic violence, following the legislative changes introduced by Bill 15.²⁸
-  The **Cadre de référence en matière d'application de la Loi sur la protection des personnes dont l'état mental présente un danger pour elles-mêmes ou pour autrui** supports workers in carrying out the *Act Respecting the Protection of Persons whose Mental State Presents a Danger to Themselves or to Others*.²⁹

Federal Policies

There may be policies enacted by the Canadian government that impact provincial legislation. For example, *An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children, Youth and Families*, came into effect in January 2020.³⁰

This Act impacts Québec's child welfare policies by shifting the legal authority from the province to Indigenous communities.

Under this Act, if an Indigenous governing body develops its own child welfare laws, those laws will prevail over provincial laws.

As of February 12, 2026, the Minister of Indigenous Services has received **eleven notices of intention** from Indigenous governing bodies in Québec to exercise their legislative authority over Child and Family Services. Of these eleven notices:



An example of Indigenous child and family services law that has been enforced in Québec is:

Click [here](#) to follow the progress being made towards the implementation of this federal Act.

-  *Loi de la Protection Sociale Atikamekw d'Opitciwan*³¹

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Our team also wishes to thank Gabrielle Chapdelaine for her contributions to this policy information sheet

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