



PART National Child Welfare, Advocacy & Family Well-Being Summit

Advancing Evidence-informed Practice to Support Child Welfare-involved Children, Youth, and Families

The Conference Journey

The PART National Child Welfare, Advocacy & Family Well-Being Summit has been designed as a three-day learning journey. Each day has a distinct focus, but the days are meant to build on one another. Together, they reflect a broader question that runs through the entire conference: how can child welfare and family-serving systems use evidence, practice wisdom, community knowledge, and lived experience to better support children, youth, families, and communities?

The structure of the Summit begins before formal child welfare involvement, then moves into the experiences of children and youth in care, and finally turns toward the systems, policies, partnerships, and organizational conditions that shape practice. This flow is intentional. It reflects the reality that child and family well-being cannot be understood through one point in time or one part of the system. Families may need support long before a crisis occurs. Children and youth who enter care require stability, connection, healing, and permanency. Practitioners and leaders also need systems that make good practice possible.

Day One: Strengthening Families, Communities, and Belonging

The first day begins by looking upstream. Participants are invited to consider how children and families can be better supported before crises deepen and before more intrusive interventions become necessary.

This focus is grounded in a growing body of work that frames child maltreatment and family distress not only as individual or family-level concerns, but also as issues shaped by social, economic, relational, and community conditions. Public health and social-ecological approaches remind us that family well-being is influenced by factors such as poverty, housing, social isolation, racism, disability, access to services, caregiver stress, community connection, and informal support networks. Prevention and early support are

therefore not separate from child welfare; they are central to any serious effort to improve child and family outcomes.

Day One asks participants to think about what it means to strengthen families before harm escalates. This includes attention to prevention, early intervention, family support, community-based services, advocacy, equity, cultural safety, and belonging. It also requires us to consider how systems can respond to families in ways that are supportive rather than only investigative or crisis driven.

Beginning the Summit here is important because it sets the foundation for everything that follows. If we want fewer children to experience separation, instability, or crisis-based intervention, we need strong families, strong communities, and accessible supports. Day One therefore begins with a central question: How can we better support children and families before crises deepen?

Day Two: Children in Care, Permanency, and Transitions

The second day moves from prevention and early support to the experiences of children and youth once child welfare involvement has become necessary. This shift is important because even with strong prevention efforts, some children will still require protection, care, and alternative living arrangements. When that happens, the quality of the child welfare response matters deeply.

Research and practice have consistently shown that children and youth in care need more than safety alone. They need stable relationships, opportunities for healing, meaningful connection to family and community, support for identity development, and a sense of belonging. Placement stability, permanency planning, trauma-informed care, kinship connections, youth voice, and transition supports are not simply program areas; they are central to how children and youth experience the system and understand themselves within it.

Day Two focuses on the question: Once children enter care, how do we improve healing, belonging, and long-term outcomes? This includes attention to children's experiences in foster care, kinship care, group care, customary care, adoption, reunification, and transitions out of care. It also includes the relationships that matter across time: siblings, caregivers, family members, community connections, practitioners, mentors, and other consistent adults.

This day builds directly from Day One. When early supports are not enough, or when safety concerns require intervention, the system's responsibility does not end with placement. In many ways, it becomes more complex. The work must shift toward reducing further harm, supporting recovery, preserving identity and relationships where possible, and creating pathways toward stability and permanency.

Day Three: Collaboration and Systems Transformation

The final day broadens the lens. After considering family and community support on Day One, and the experiences of children and youth in care on Day Two, Day Three asks what needs to change at the system level.

This focus is necessary because practitioners cannot do this work well in isolation. Evidence-informed practice depends on more than individual knowledge or commitment. It requires organizations that support learning, supervision, reflection, data use, collaboration, implementation, and continuous improvement. It also requires strong relationships across systems, including child welfare, health, mental health, education, justice, housing, advocacy, research, and community-based services.

Day Three is shaped by the understanding that many of the challenges facing children and families are not contained within a single service system. Families often move across multiple systems at once, and the quality of coordination between those systems can affect whether support feels helpful, fragmented, delayed, or inaccessible. Systems transformation therefore requires more than new programs. It requires attention to leadership, organizational culture, accountability, workforce well-being, research-practice partnerships, policy, equity, and implementation.

The guiding question for Day Three is: How do we transform entire systems, so children and families receive better support? This question brings the conference full circle. If Day One focuses on strengthening families and communities, and Day Two focuses on improving the experiences of children and youth in care, Day Three focuses on the conditions that make those goals possible.

Together, the three days tell a connected story. We begin by asking how families can be supported earlier and more effectively. We then consider how to improve care, healing, and permanency when child welfare involvement occurs. Finally, we examine how organizations and systems must change so that better practice is not left to individual effort alone.

This journey reflects PART's broader commitment to evidence-informed practice. The goal is not only to share information, but to help participants connect evidence to real decisions, real relationships, and real systems. By the end of the Summit, participants should have a stronger understanding of how prevention, care, collaboration, and systems change are connected, and how each of us can contribute to better outcomes for children, youth, families, and communities.

How Each Day is Designed

The PART National Child Welfare, Advocacy & Family Well-Being Summit has been intentionally designed to guide participants through a full cycle of learning. Each day follows the same structure, allowing attendees to build knowledge progressively while viewing each topic from multiple perspectives. The schedule is based on a simple principle: understanding evidence is only one part of evidence-informed practice. Participants also need opportunities to see how evidence has been implemented, hear directly from those affected by the work, and leave with practical strategies they can apply in their own organizations.

Each day begins with a **Research Keynote**. These keynote presentations establish the evidence base for the day's theme by synthesizing current research, identifying emerging trends, and highlighting important implications for policy and practice. Rather than focusing on a single study or program, Research Keynotes provide participants with a broad understanding of what the evidence tells us about the day's topic and identify the questions that should guide the conversations ahead. By beginning with a shared evidence base, participants have a common foundation that carries through the remainder of the day.

Following the keynote, participants move into a series of **Spotlight** Speaker presentations. PART Spotlights are focused 15-minute presentations that bring forward promising practices, emerging research, innovative approaches, and critical perspectives from across the child and family-serving sector.

After lunch, the conference intentionally shifts from research to people. Each day includes a **Rising Researcher** presentation, showcasing work from graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, or early career researchers. Supporting emerging scholars is an important part of PART's commitment to strengthening evidence-informed practice in Canada. These presentations provide participants with insight into the next generation of research while giving new researchers an opportunity to share their work with practitioners, leaders, and decisionmakers from across the country.

The conference then turns to **Lived Experience**. Evidence-informed practice recognizes that research evidence, professional expertise, and lived experience each represent valuable sources of knowledge. Hearing directly from children, youth, families, caregivers, or community members helps participants understand how policies, services, and professional decisions are experienced in everyday life. These presentations encourage reflection, provide important context for the day's discussions, and remind us that the ultimate purpose of research and practice is to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families.

With this foundation established, participants hear from the day's **Practice Keynote**. These presentations demonstrate how organizations, communities, or partnerships have translated evidence into meaningful practice change. Practice Keynotes move beyond describing successful initiatives to explore the realities of implementation—what worked,

what proved challenging, what adaptations were required, and what lessons may be useful for others. By this point in the day, participants have explored the research, considered new ideas, and reflected on lived experience. The Practice Keynote brings these perspectives together by showing how evidence-informed practice can be implemented within real organizations serving children and families.

Each day concludes with **From Evidence to Action**, a facilitated session led by PART. This closing presentation is designed to help participants synthesize the day's learning and identify practical actions they can take within their own roles and organizations. Rather than ending with information alone, the conference closes each day by asking participants to consider how the evidence they have encountered can inform decision-making, service delivery, supervision, leadership, and policy development.

Finally, participants and presenters are invited to remain for **Office Hours**, an informal opportunity for discussion, networking, mentoring, and questions. These sessions are particularly valuable for students and emerging professionals, who have the opportunity to speak directly with researchers, practitioners, leaders, and sector experts about careers, current challenges, and future directions for the field.