



Native Women's Association of Canada

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada

FACT SHEET

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE AND THE INUIT CHILD FIRST INITIATIVE

INTRODUCTION

As a result of colonial policies, including the Indian Act, Indigenous children in Canada have faced inadequate access to healthcare, contributing to poor health outcomes. Indigenous children have a higher rate of injury, accidental death, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), respiratory tract infections, obesity, dental problems, asthma, and other chronic conditions. Children are equally affected as adults by household income, living conditions, food security, and education access. Every child deserves access to adequate healthcare and support, and ongoing investments into the healthcare of Indigenous children will have to include diminishing the disparities when accessing health care.

This fact sheet will provide introductory information on accessing Jordan's Principle and the Inuit Child First Initiative. It includes essential information on eligibility, types of products, services, and support offered, how to access resources, and steps to take if a request is denied.

WHAT IS JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE?

Jordan's Principle is named after Jordan River Anderson, a young boy from Norway House Cree Nation, in Manitoba. Jordan River Anderson was born in 1999 and had multiple disabilities; and spent his life at the hospital from birth. At the age of two, doctors suggested Jordan be moved to a special home for his medical needs, but federal and provincial governments could not come to a consensus on who was responsible for the payments. Provinces/territories provide health services through transfer payments made by the federal government, but Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) subsidizes provincial/territorial programs for Indigenous communities through direct funding. In unresolved decisions between the federal and provincial governments, Jordan spent the rest of his life at the hospital until he passed away at the age of five, in a Winnipeg hospital.

Jordan's Principle aims to eliminate health inequalities and service gaps for First Nations children, Two-Spirit, LGBTQQIA+, and children with disabilities. As a result, the House of Commons passed Jordan's Principle in 2007, in memory of Jordan. Jordan's Principle is a legal requirement—not a policy or program. It became a legal obligation that First Nations children receive products, services, and support they need when needed, and the payments would not interfere with their care.

BARRIERS: In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) ruled that the Government of Canada's original definition eligibility for Jordan's Principle was discriminatory because it only included First Nations children on reserve, with disabilities, or a short-term issue. To end the racial discrimination against First Nations children and discriminatory practices, the CHRT instructed that the Government of Canada renew its approach to Jordan's Principle. In 2017, CHRT instructed that all First Nations children be considered and provided with substantive equality by providing culturally appropriate services and safeguarding the child's best interests—including providing additional assistance to ensure First Nations children have an equal opportunity to thrive. In its renewed version, Jordan's Principle states First Nations children should receive government services with no gaps in mental health, special education, dental, physical therapy, speech therapy, medical equipment, physiotherapy, and more. Through this ruling, it was important that the child received the services first—and that the government department of first contact pays for the service and can be reimbursed from other governments or departments after the fact.



WHAT IS THE INUIT CHILD FIRST INITIATIVE?

The Government of Canada is working with the Inuit partners, provinces, and territories to provide an Inuit-specific approach to the health, social, and educational needs of Inuit children. Similar to Jordan's Principle, the Inuit Child First Initiative ensures Inuit children have access to critical government-funded health, social, and educational support, services, and resources when needed—without interfering with quality of care. There is a regional focal point in each province and territory; families and children can contact a regional coordinator to receive support in accessing the Inuit Child First Initiative, and directly submit an application through a regional focal point. The regional focal point for the Inuit Child First Initiative also supports Jordan's Principle.



ELIGIBILITY

Jordan's Principle

In 2020, the CHRT released a ruling on Jordan's Principle: A child will be eligible based on each province and territory age of minority—typically ranging between 16-19 years—and if they permanently reside in Canada, along with:

- If they are registered, or eligible to be registered under the Indian Act, living on or off reserve.
- If a parent or guardian is registered, or eligible to be registered under the Indian Act, living on or off reserve.
- If a child is not registered, or not eligible under the Indian Act and lives off-reserve, but is a recognized member of their Nation and have urgent and/or life-threatening needs.
- If they are ordinarily a resident on reserve (including children without status).
- If they are citizens of a self-governing First Nation, living on or off their territorial lands.

Inuit Child First Initiative

The Inuit Child First Initiative gives Inuit children access to essential, government-funded, health, social, and educational products, services, and support. All Inuit children, no matter where they live in Canada, are eligible if they are both:

- Recognized by an Inuit land claim organization.
- Under the age of majority in the province/territory they are a residence of.

Eligibility for Métis children

Métis children are currently not eligible for Jordan's Principle unless they are ordinarily residents on reserve or are eligible for registration under Section 6 of the Indian Act.





WHAT IS FUNDED UNDER JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE AND THE INUIT CHILD FIRST INITIATIVE?

Funding covers a wide range of health, social, and educational needs for First Nations and Inuit children. The following are some examples provided on the Government of Canada website.

HEALTH

- Wheelchair ramps.
- Addiction services.
- Services from Elders.
- Mental health services.
- Assessments and screenings.
- Medical supplies and equipment.
- Therapeutic services.
- Mobility aids.*
- Specialized hearing aids.*
- Traditional healing services.*
- Services for children in care.*
- Transportation to appointments.*
- Long-term care for children with specialized needs.*

SOCIAL

- Land-based activities.
- Specialized summer camps.
- Respite care.
- Social worker.*
- Specialized programs based on cultural beliefs and practices.*

EDUCATION

- Tutoring services.
- Educational assistants.
- Specialized school transportation.
- Psycho-educational assessments.
- Assistive technologies and electronics.

*Services covered only by Jordan's Principle



ACCESSING SERVICES

Jordan's Principle

To request access to Jordan Principal products, services, and/or support, a parent, guardian, or authorized representative can submit a request by taking the following steps:

1. Requests can be made through the call centre, open 24/7, or through a regional coordinator based in each province and territory.
2. Once the request is received, the regional focal point coordinator will review the request and a decision will be sent to the applicant.
 - a. Any urgent request for a child or children from the same family will be processed within 12 hours once all necessary information is received, and all other requests are processed within 48 hours.
3. Requests for a group of children will take about 48 hours to process, given that all necessary information is provided.

Inuit Child First Initiative

To request access to the Inuit Child First Initiative products, services, and support; a parent, guardian, or authorized representative can submit a request on behalf of a child. An Inuk child over the age of 16 can submit a request for themselves by taking the following steps:

1. The applicant should start by calling their regional focal point or by calling the national call centre, at: 1-855-572-4453, available 24/7.
2. For a group of children from multiple families or guardians, a request can be submitted by a community or a service provider. Types of services a group can request are:
 - a. Wheelchair ramps.
 - b. Cultural support programs.
 - c. Specialized school transportation.
 - d. Specialized education and communication equipment.
3. The request will then be reviewed, and a decision will be sent to the applicant in writing.



APPEALING A DENIED REQUEST

If a request is denied under either Jordan's Principle or the Inuit Child First Initiative, the parent, guardian, or authorized representative—or the child themselves who is at the age of consent in their province or territory—can take the following step:

1. The applicant can appeal the decision up to one year after the request was denied.
2. The appeal request must contain, at a minimum:
 - a) The child's name and date of birth.
 - b) The products or services requested.
 - c) The date of the denial and a copy of the denial letter.
3. Once the necessary information is provided and the appeal is received, it will take up to 30 days for the application to be processed.



MOVING FORWARD

The Government of Canada must work with provincial, territorial, and Indigenous partners to remove barriers to health, social, and educational needs faced by First Nations and Inuit families. The following barriers need to be removed, or amended, to make the process accessible to all families and children:

1. Applications for accessing either Jordan's Principle or the Inuit Child First Initiative need to be more accessible and considerate of all individuals. The reality of these processes are inflexible, daunting, and demands significant supporting documentation. Parents, guardians, and children are forced to maneuver through bureaucratic hoops to access essential health, social, and educational services. A successful applicant recalled submitting a total of 11 letters, which included two letters from a hospital, three letters from a family physician, one letter from a specialist doctor, two letters from a classroom teacher, one email from the school board, and two emails from a psychologist.¹ The required documentation needs to be simplified and accessible to ensure First Nations and Inuit children have an equal chance for quality life.
2. To access services, applicants must have access to a computer, internet, printers, scanners, long-distance telephone services, bank accounts, and credit cards to process payments. This method of processing applications is not accessible to all families, especially as there are accessibility barriers to technology and connectivity in Indigenous communities. These limitations for accessibility continue to put Indigenous children at risk.

¹ (Thompson, 2020)

CONSULTED RESOURCES

- **Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation. (2020, November 7).** Canadian Human Rights Tribunal 36 Questions and Answers. Retrieved from: www.ansn.ca/images/Q&A-updated-JordansPrinciple.pdf#:~:text=Métis%20children%20are%20not%20currently%20eligible%20under%20Jordan's,separate%20process%20for%20confirming%20eligibility%20under%20-Inuit%20CFI.
- **The Canadian Encyclopedia. (2006, February 7).** Health of Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Retrieved from: www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-people-health.
- **The Government of Canada. (2019, August 8).** Honoring Jordan River Anderson. Retrieved from: www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1583703111205/1583703134432.
- **The Government of Canada. (2022, August 7).** Submit a request under Jordan's Principle. Retrieved from: www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1568396296543/1582657596387#sec2.
- **The Government of Canada. (2022, August 7).** Supporting Inuit Children. Retrieved from: www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1536348095773/1536348148664#sec3.
- **Thompson, L. (2020, February 21).** The Myth of the Inuit Child—First Initiative. Nunatsiq News. Retrieved from: [www.nunatsiq.com/stories/article/the-myth-of-the-inuit-child-first-initiative/.](http://www.nunatsiq.com/stories/article/the-myth-of-the-inuit-child-first-initiative/)





FACT SHEET

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE AND THE INUIT CHILD FIRST INITIATIVE



Native Women's Association of Canada

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada