



Jordan's Principle

Ensuring First Nations Children Receive the Supports They Need When They Need Them

What is Jordan's Principle?

Jordan's Principle is a child first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson. Jordan was a First Nations child from Norway House Cree Nation in Manitoba. Born with complex medical needs, Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his at home care. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of five years old, never having spent a day in a family home.

Jordan's Principle ensures that First Nations children can access the supports they need, when they need them. Supports are provided on the basis of substantive equality, best interests of the child, culturally relevant service provision, and account for distinct community circumstances. When services are requested, the government of first contact pays for the service and can resolve any jurisdictional or payment disputes later.

Why is Jordan's Principle important?

Payment disputes within and between federal and provincial or territorial governments over services and supports for First Nations children are common. First Nations children are frequently left waiting for supports they desperately need, or are denied supports that are available to other children. This includes, but is not limited to, supports in education, health, early childhood services, recreation, and culture and language. Even when there is no jurisdictional dispute, First Nations children often face a lack of culturally appropriate supports that fully meet their needs. Jordan's Principle is a legal requirement that provides access to supports for First Nations children in need and ensures that the government of first contact pays for the supports without delay.

What did the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal say about Jordan's Principle?

The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (Tribunal) is a legal institution whose mandate is to adjudicate cases where there has been an alleged breach of the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. In 2016, nine years after the case was filed by the Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations, the Tribunal found the Canadian Government (Indigenous Services Canada) to be racially discriminating against 165,000 First Nations children and their families in its provision of the First Nations Child and Family Services program and by failing to implement the full scope of Jordan's Principle. This ruling is known as 2016 CHRT 2. In this ruling, the Tribunal ordered Canada to stop its discriminatory policies and practices, to reform the First Nations Child and Family Services program, to stop applying the narrow definition of Jordan's Principle that it had been using and "to take measures to immediately implement the full meaning and scope of Jordan's Principle" (para. 481).

What else should I know?

Since the 2016 landmark finding, further procedural and non-compliance orders have been made by the Tribunal. The case is ongoing and new rulings may arise in the future.

Below is a summary of the Tribunal's orders relating to Jordan's Principle since 2016 CHRT 2. To read the full rulings and other information related to Jordan's Principle, visit fncaringsociety.com/chrt-orders and fncaringsociety.com/jordans-principle.

2016 CHRT 10

- Canada must immediately implement the full meaning and scope of Jordan's Principle as per the House of Commons definition within two weeks of the ruling (by May 10, 2016).
- Jordan's Principle includes all jurisdictional disputes, including between departments, and involving all First Nations children, not only those with multiple disabilities.
- The government of first contact pays for the services "without the need for policy review or case conferencing before funding is provided" (para. 33).

2016 CHRT 16

- Canada will not reduce or restrict funding for First Nations child and family services due to services being covered by Jordan's Principle.
- Jordan's Principle applies to all First Nations children, not only those resident on reserve. In addition, Jordan's Principle is not limited to Canada's narrow definition of First Nations children with "disabilities and those who present with a discrete, short-term issue" (para. 119).

2017 CHRT 14 and 2017 CHRT 35 (Amendment)

- Canada must stop relying on definitions of Jordan's Principle that are not in compliance with the Tribunal's orders.
- Canada must respond to individual requests within 48 hours, and within 12 hours for urgent needs. Canada must respond to group requests within 1 week, and within 48 hours for group requests for urgent needs.
- Case conferencing may occur only with relevant professionals when consultations are reasonably necessary to determine the child's clinical needs. 2017 CHRT 35 affirmed that clinical case conferencing is not to happen before the recommended service is approved and funding is provided. Administrative case conferencing is not allowed.



- A dispute amongst government departments or between governments is not a necessary requirement for a child to be eligible for Jordan's Principle.
- Previous requests made from April 1, 2009 onwards shall be reviewed to ensure compliance with these latest orders.

2019 CHRT 7

- Interim ruling that First Nations children without *Indian Act* status, who are recognized by their First Nation and who have urgent or life-threatening needs, are eligible for funding through Jordan's Principle. The order is in place until the evidence has been heard regarding eligibility and the Tribunal issues a ruling.
- The Tribunal is clear that the interim order does not override First Nations' rights, including the inherent rights of self-determination and the right to determine citizenship and membership.

2019 CHRT 39

- The Tribunal finds that Canada is "wilfully and recklessly" discriminating against First Nations children.
- The Tribunal orders Canada to pay the maximum amount allowable (\$40,000) under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA) to compensate certain First Nations children, youth, and families who have been harmed by the child welfare system or were denied or delayed receipt of services due to Canada's discriminatory implementation of Jordan's Principle.

Update on Compensation

- The Tribunal made additional orders on the compensation in 2020 and 2021 (2020 CHRT 15, 2021 CHRT 6, and 2021 CHRT 7) about the compensation eligibility criteria and the Framework for the Payment of Compensation.
- In addition to the Tribunal case, class-action lawsuits were filed on behalf of First Nations children affected by child welfare and Canada's failure to implement Jordan's Principle. The Caring Society is not part of the class-action lawsuits.
- On December 29, 2021, the plaintiffs to the class action lawsuits signed an Agreement in Principle (AIP) with Canada regarding the Compensation. The Caring Society did not sign this AIP.
- A Final Agreement has not been reached.

2020 CHRT 20

- Canada is ordered to immediately consider eligible for services through Jordan’s Principle:
 - > First Nations children who will become eligible for *Indian Act* registration/status under S-3 implementation.
- The Tribunal finds two other categories of First Nations children who will be eligible in the future following a further order from the Tribunal:
 - > First Nations children without *Indian Act* status who are recognized by their respective First Nation.
 - > First Nations children who do not have *Indian Act* status and who are not eligible for *Indian Act* status, but have a parent/guardian with, or who is eligible for, *Indian Act* status.

2020 CHRT 36

- The Tribunal approves four categories of eligibility submitted by the parties, in keeping with the Tribunal’s direction in 2020 CHRT 20. Children meeting *any one* of the following criteria are eligible for consideration under Jordan’s Principle:
 - > A child resident on or off reserve who is registered or eligible to be registered under the *Indian Act*, as amended from time to time;
 - > A child resident on or off reserve who has one parent/guardian who is registered or eligible to be registered under the *Indian Act*;
 - > A child resident on or off reserve who is recognized by their Nation for the purposes of Jordan’s Principle; or
 - > The child is ordinarily resident on reserve.
- Recognition by a First Nation is for the purposes of Jordan’s Principle only. This recognition does not extend past Jordan’s Principle.
- Jordan’s Principle is not a fixed budget program—it is a legal obligation of the Government of Canada, meaning as more children are eligible the funding pot expands. This means that recognizing a child for the purposes of Jordan’s Principle does not mean another child gets less.
- The order sets out a default process, as recommended by the parties, for confirming that a child is recognized by a First Nation for the purposes of Jordan’s Principle. This default process is meant to facilitate substantive equality, not act as a barrier, and First Nations or Provincial Territorial Organizations can agree to a different process (para. 42). As per the default process:

- > Families and organizations who are preparing to submit a Jordan’s Principle request under the eligibility category must obtain confirmation of recognition from the First Nation. Alternatively, families can give Indigenous Services Canada consent to obtain confirmation;
- > First Nations can designate a person or persons as officials who can provide confirmation of recognition. If the First Nation has not named a Designated Official, confirmation can be given by the Chief, Council member with the child welfare or health portfolio, the First Nation’s most senior administrative official, or any of these officials’ designate.
- Canada will provide funding to assist First Nations in setting up a process for recognizing children who do not have status and are not eligible for status if the First Nation does not already have such a system.
- In urgent cases where children are likely to experience irremediable harm if they do not get the help they need, Canada will try to contact the First Nation to determine recognition but if unable to reach the First Nation, the child will get the services needed to remedy the immediate risk.

2021 CHRT 41 Amendment

- This order is an amendment to 2021 CHRT 41 based on the consent of the parties and following a Letter-Decision from the Tribunal. A Letter-Decision is the equivalent of an oral ruling being made at the bench, which is binding and for which legal reasons will follow.
- The Tribunal orders Canada to fund all First Nations or First Nations–authorized service providers for the full cost of the purchase and/or construction of capital assets that support the delivery of Jordan’s Principle services to children on reserve, including in Ontario and the Yukon.
- The Tribunal further orders Canada to fund First Nations or First Nations–authorized service providers to conduct capital needs and feasibility studies regarding the purchase and/or construction of capital assets for the delivery of Jordan’s Principle on-reserve, including in Ontario, in the Northwest Territories, and in Yukon, and off-reserve.

- The orders made above apply until such time as one of the options below occur:
 1. Nation (Indigenous)-to-Nation (Canada) agreement respecting self-governance to provide its own child welfare services.
 2. Canada reaches an agreement that is Nation-specific even if the Nation is not yet providing its own child welfare services and the provisions for major capital in the agreement for child and family services or Jordan's Principle are more advantageous for the Nation than the orders in this ruling.
 3. Long-term reform is completed in accordance with best practices recommended by the experts and the parties and interested parties, and funding for the purchase or construction of major capital assets is no longer based on discriminatory funding formulas or programs, including as set out in a Final Order by the Tribunal, approving a Final Settlement Agreement signed by Canada and the Parties.
- The Tribunal rules that Canada cannot interpret the *Financial Administration Act* (FAA) in a way that hinders its implementation of the Tribunal orders. Tribunal orders are to be read harmoniously with the FAA and, in the event of conflict, the Tribunal orders have primacy over the FAA.

2022 CHRT 8

- The Tribunal orders Canada, as part of the commitment to non-discrimination and substantive equality, to assess the resources required to assist families and/or young adults in identifying supports for needed services for high-needs Jordan's Principle recipients past the age of majority.
- The Tribunal orders Canada to fund research through the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD), including:
 - > IFSD assessment regarding the available data on Jordan's Principle requests to inform a future cost assessment of Canada's current implementation of Jordan's Principle and program reform; and
 - > Upon completion of the Jordan's Principle Data Assessment, the IFSD needs assessment regarding a long-term funding approach for Jordan's Principle, which includes identifying gaps in services and resources available to First Nations children, youth, and families.
- The Tribunal orders Canada to implement mandatory cultural competency training and performance commitments for all employees within Indigenous Services Canada. As well, Canada is ordered to establish an expert advisory committee to develop and oversee the implementation of an evidence-informed work plan to prevent the recurrence of discrimination.

**To make a request for services through Jordan's Principle
or for questions, contact 1-855-572-4453.**

To learn more about Jordan's Principle visit jordansprinciple.ca.



**First Nations Child & Family
Caring Society of Canada**

fncaresociety.com