

Supplementary Resources Report

Overview of Ontario Early Years Centres/Family Resource Centres (OEYCs)

1. Program Description

OEYCs have an important role in the local development and implementation of Best Start Plans given their mandate to provide early learning opportunities and resources for parents with children 0-6 years in all communities across Ontario

In Halton, there are three main locations for Ontario Early Years Centres/Family Resource Centres (OEYCs), eight satellites¹, and eleven outreach sites².

- Oakville-Parent Child Centre (OPCC)
 - 3 satellites
 - 4 outreach sites
- Milton Community Resource Centre (MCRC)
 - Satellites
 - Acton, Georgetown and Glen Williams sites through Halton Links2Care (L2C) (formerly Halton Hills Community Support & Information),
 - 4 outreach sites
- Burlington Family Resource Centre (BFRC) – open 6 days a week
 - 2 satellites
 - 3 outreach sites

Each OEYC is responsible for providing the following core services:

- early learning services (play-based, problem solving)
- parent/caregiver education (including prenatal/postnatal resources and healthy child development)
- information on and referral to local community services
- early literacy programs
- outreach services
- volunteer recruitment/coordination
- program effectiveness/child outcomes measurement
- linkages to the community and local service providers

¹OEYC satellite sites, as defined by the province, are additional OEYC locations that provide regular OEYC programs and are directly operated by OEYCs. This is not to be confused with the reference to 'hub satellite model', which is a term that describes a partnership relationship between the core hub site and linked services that are delivered by other organizations in other locations e.g., secondary schools, OEYCs, Places of Worship etc.

² OEYC outreach sites typically operate a reduced number of OEYC programs at various times throughout the week in a shared location with other services (commercial/non-profit).

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Each OEYC also endeavours to develop and establish tailored programs and services that have been identified through local planning processes. However, the OEYCs have clearly indicated the financial challenges of responding to these needs given that there has been no increase in funding since the initial phase 1 allocation in 2002.

2. Funding Arrangements

OEYCs were established in April 2002 by the provincial government, building on existing Parent-Child and Family Resource Centres. Three OEYCs were established in Halton, one each in Oakville, Burlington and Milton (serving both Milton and Halton Hills through its Memorandum of Understanding with Links2Care).

OEYCs are funded directly by MCYS; however, Links2Care, which has a family resource centre status is funded 80% provincially and 20% municipally through Halton Region in its CMSM capacity.

Under Best Start, MCYS invited communities to revisit the funding arrangement of OEYCs with the province as part of their Best Start Plans if they so desired. According to MCYS, local decisions for a change in funding arrangements would be considered, provided that the local OEYCs wish to change their funding arrangements from MCYS to the local CMSM, and the Best Start Network agreed. Halton's OEYCs were approached about their interest in pursuing a change in funding arrangements in September 2005. They requested more discussions with the CMSM around the possibility before they made their decision. These discussions occurred in 2006, and resulted in the decision to maintain the current funding arrangements with the Ministry.

3. OEYC Consultation (Best Start)

OEYCs employ Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), and as such, have expressed significant concerns around how the Best Start's Wage Enhancement Funding for Licensed Child Care will impact on the availability of ECEs for OEYCs.

The OEYCs have noted that an increase in salaries for ECEs in the licensed child care sector, combined with the creation of additional child care spaces, will have a serious impact on the OEYCs ability to hire trained, high quality staff to implement their programs. The OEYCs have identified this as a critical issue that will impact on service levels given that quality of staff was identified as a notable strength in a 2003-04 province-wide review of OEYCs.

4. Link to OKN Hubs

OEYCs are viewed as hub satellites under the OKN hub model in the same way secondary schools or other services located off site are considered hub satellites; the term satellite in this context reflects a partnership, not a reporting/directly operating relationship.

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OEYCs provide a portal/gateway to services located at the hub, or as a linking service to the hub. A focus group was held with the Ontario Early Years Advisory Group where it was made clear that duplication between the OEYCs and the hubs was undesirable. There was some concern that if OEYC programs are offered at hubs, then it may be confusing for the public. Hubs and OEYCs need to plan and work together in order to avoid duplication and complement each other.

Currently, the OEYCs are working as part of the local hub planning and implementation committees.

While the OEYCs agreed with the importance of being partnered with the OKN hubs and involved in planning programs at both hub and satellite locations, they did suggest that over the longer-term, OEYCs should also be considered as a core location for a hub, along with other locations in a community.

5. Link with Child Care Services

Outlined below are some of the current links OEYCs have with the child care sector:

- OPCC offers licensed nursery school services
- MCRC offers licensed nursery school and child care
- MCRC operates Halton's Child Care Registry
- MCRC provides licensed home child care service
- all provide information on child care to clients.

The OEYCs would like to offer more evening and weekend programming for parents but require additional funding to fully support this. There may be opportunities to explore some unique partnerships with child care centres in this area. One suggestion that emerged in the focus groups was for child care to continue over the dinner hour where both child and parent have dinner while the parent participates in a parenting program.

6. Ontario Early Years Centre – Burlington

Burlington Family Resource Centre (BFRC)

BFRC's mission is to 'promote positive child development through programs and services that strengthen the ability of families and the community to raise and nurture children'.

The BFRC is currently in the process of implementing the following Strategic Directions for 2006-09. Some of the priorities in each area are noted below

- ensure adequate funding is available to support priorities and objectives
 - stabilization and expansion funding
 - establish fundraising committee, policy and plan
 - implement and monitor fundraising activities

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- develop effective human resources policies for both employees and volunteers
 - volunteer expansion
- deliver quality services to meet current and emerging needs
 - ongoing analysis of community needs as information becomes available through such instruments as the EDI, community mapping
 - development and evaluation of new programs to meet priority needs

BFRC has implemented many new programs as part of its strategic plan. These include, but are not limited to

...parent education

- Evening Single Parenting Program twice monthly with child care provided
- Saturday morning parenting workshop series
- Triple P Positive Parenting
- Kids Have Stress Too
- Parent Groups at Our Community Cares
- Fatherhood Initiative – Building Our Children’s Character

....children’s programs

- Fit as a Fiddle
- Intergenerational Mother Goose
- Baby and Me Drop-Ins
- Wiggles, Squiggles and Giggles
- ABC Talk with Me
- Family Math

Some current program challenges are

- meeting the needs of Burlington families within the OEYC funding structure as expenses increase and funding levels do not
- transportation to and from centres for families with financial need
- accessibility of programs/services to all areas of Burlington e.g., NE Burlington currently under-served by the OEYC
- outreach to target groups such as children with special needs and families with language barriers
- a lottery system of registration has recently been introduced, which has resulted in greater accessibility to programs and a more equitable process; however, this has encouraged new parents to register for programs, resulting in longer waiting lists than before; an additional eight week session of programming and more registered programs have been added to reduce wait lists

In 2005-06

- more than 2,400 parents/caregivers made over 23,000 visits to BFRC sites for programs and services

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- more than 3,300 children made over 33,000 visits to BFRC programs
almost 900 parents attended parenting workshops and education sessions

7. Ontario Early Years Centre – Oakville

Oakville Parent-Child Centre (OPCC)

OPCC's mission is "To support, nurture and empower families, children and their caregivers". This mission reflects OPCC's commitment to families and children and the value that is placed on giving children the best possible start in life.

The OPCC has recently relocated its' main location from the Kerr Street community to a larger ground floor facility on the North Service Road. This has enabled us to increase our programming as well as providing improved program facilities for families.

The OPCC is currently implementing its 5 year Strategic Plan (2003-08). Outlined below are some key goals, and related strategies:

- awareness and a network of strong partnerships within the community
 - strategic & annual marketing/awareness process
 - collecting and maintaining updated demographic and needs profile for specific (diverse) populations and services
- progressive and accountable organizational performance
- delivery of quality and diverse education, support and resources which address evolving needs
 - identifying demands, needs and gaps
 - diversity focused outreach
 - expanded program delivery channels
- dedicated, skilled and qualified staff through
 - annual succession planning
 - regular compensation reviews
 - training and development
 - foster staff well-being and team building
 - equal employment opportunity
- dedicated and active volunteer base
 - succession planning for board members
 - board training
 - recognition

OPCC has implemented new programs in response to community needs as well as increasing the number of outreach sites. These include, but are not limited to

- securing space at both a grocery store and a fitness centre in River Oaks to address long waiting lists
- delivery of an intergenerational Mother Goose program in a Senior's Centre in West Oakville
- hosting a Saturday DEIPP clinic to ensure access to the service for working parents

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- hosting Calling New Parents program in partnership with the Halton Health Dept.
- hosting prenatal classes offered by the Halton Regional Health Dept.
- increasing the music and movement programs to address waiting lists
- implementing ESSO Math and Super Science which enhance school readiness
- developing a program for families and children with special needs
- continuing to develop and deliver the Lunch and Learn program for parents in the workplace
- training staff in the Triple P Parent education model
- offering Saturday parent workshops with child care for working parents

Current program challenges are

- continuing to meet the needs of the Kerr Street community and
- the establishment of a Kerr Street presence response to increased demand creating waiting lists in many existing programs (e.g., Mother Goose, parent & tot parents etc.)
- need for segment specific strategies e.g., continuing programs for parents returning to work
- request from parents for more information on social and emotional development in children and parenting strategies, including managing behaviour
- continued development of parent programs with child care for parents working outside the home
- further development of outreach sites

In 2005 - 2006 OPCC provided service through our OEYC funding to:

- 2,799 children
- 28,370 child visits
- 2,217 parents
- 23,488 parent visits
- 731 parents in workshops/seminars

8. Ontario Early Years Centre – North Halton

MCRC and Links2Care work together to provide early learning programs to North Halton. These organizations share planning and OEYC staff.

Milton Community Resource Centre (MCRC)

Strategic Directions for 2005-06 include

- market and advertise MCRC's new 21,000 square foot building
- implementation of a new child care center
- develop the new Bruce Trail Early Learning Centre for 2007
- construction & funding of a unique outdoor play space
- expansion of school age programs

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- expansion of the Reggio inspired curriculum
- orientation & recruitment process for new board members

In Milton, MCRC provides

- Early Years Centre, satellite and outreach sites
- Bronte Street School (child care 18 mos. to 5 years)
- Bruce Trail Early Learning Centre (new for spring 2007)
- Cherish Private Home Child Care
- Family Resource Programs
- Nursery Schools (Cherish, Brookville)
- school age child care (Chris Hadfield P.S., Bruce Trail P.S. and Hawthorne Village P.S.)
- school aged programs (before and after school programs, camps, monthly youth dances)
- toy library
- The Halton Resource Connection (THRC) (in partnership with Halton Region)
- Creative Recycle Centre (as part of THRC)
- DEIPP Clinics (in partnership with Partners Supporting Children with Special Needs for Children with Special Needs)
- Halton Child Care Registry

MCRC has moved (Aug 2006) to a new expanded 21,500 square foot facility in West Milton, which has been identified as a higher risk area with a higher rate of children not ready to enter kindergarten. The new centre includes a new child care facility (100 children), 5,400 square feet of outside play space, two nursery school rooms, and a full kitchen with a cook and larger Early Years rooms.

Some current program challenges are to

- offer more programming for parents and babies taking the one year maternity leave
- expand into South Milton (currently no commercial space there)
- meeting the demand for services due to high population growth in Milton

Links2Care (L2C) (Halton Hills)

L2C is a multi-service organization providing services in the community to people of all ages. L2C's Mission Statement will be developed through a strategic planning process in 2007.

Services include community support, information and referral for children, youth and senior's programs. Current strategic directions for the Children's program are as follows

- develop programs for fathers
- increase outreach to the community
- increase parenting capacity in the community
- outreach to high risk families; dinner clubs; more parenting information in the community

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- deliver programs for working parents
- provide evening programs and weekend programs
- maintain and increase program development with partners
- further development of programs inclusive of special needs children

Programs provided in both Georgetown and Acton include

- a resource library,
- Mother Goose program,
- parent education opportunities such as Networking Together and Young Parents Dinner Club
- parenting programs and workshops
- other programs offered in collaboration: Prenatal Classes, Halton Prenatal Nutrition Program, Calling New Parents, DEIPP Clinics, Halton-Peel Preschool Speech and Language visits and consultations
- Family Resource Programs include Toy Lending Library, music and movement, and Summer Fun Mini Camp

Acton services include outreach programs like Stay & Play, an outreach program in partnership with Children's Health, HCYS, Halton Hills Public Library and HCAS offered at the Our Kids Acton Hub

Some current program challenges are

- time and staffing for program development, including the development of new resources
- limited financial resources for new programs; resources must be taken from existing programs
- lack of transportation is an issue with respect to families being able to attend programs if they do not have a vehicle; public transportation is not available within Georgetown and there are only a few GO transit buses between Acton and Georgetown each day.
- finding affordable space (free) in the community for outreach is almost impossible

Combined Service Statistics for Milton/Halton Hills

As reported to MCYS, in 2005-06 the following service units were provided in Milton and Halton Hills:

- 1,947 children
- 21,544 child visits
- 1,296 parents
- 17,864 parent visits
- 288 parents in workshops/seminars
- 3 Child & Youth Health Promotion Programs Provided by Halton Region