

# **Niagara Best Start Child & Family Centre Reference Group**

March 26, 2013 10:30am – 12pm

**Pathstone (3340 Schmon Parkway, Thorold) in the Community Room**

## **Agenda**

1. Welcome
2. Review and Approve Minutes from February meeting
3. Community Integration Leader Project
  - a. Revised Niagara Framework for BSCFSS
  - b. Sites of Practice Updates:
    - Place-Based (Fairview Neighbourhood)
    - Non-Place-Based (Fort Erie)
    - Aboriginal Community
  - c. Communications Update
  - d. Professional Development Update
  - e. Research & Evaluation Update
  - f. Project next steps

### Next Meeting Dates:

- April 23rd 2013, 10:30am – 12pm Pathstone
- May
- June

## Niagara Best Start Child and Family Centre Reference Group (BSCFCRG)

March 26<sup>th</sup> 2013 – Pathstone

**Attendees:** Jeff Biletski, Kim Cole, Lisa DeGasperi, Jennifer Dockstader, Darlene Edgar, Bonnie Filipchuk, Dorothy Harvey, Linda Morrice, Florence Ngenzebuhoro, Sandra Noel, Glory Ressler,

**Regrets:** Anne Biscaro, Jaynane Burning-Field, Christina Carter, Tiffany Gartner, Sue Greer, Mark Lefebvre, Judy Reid, Jackie Van Lankveld, Kaarina Vogin,

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
<b>1. WELCOME</b>	- Committee members were welcomed by Co-Chairs L. DeGasperi and B. Filipchuk	
<b>2. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY MEETING</b>	- February meeting minutes were reviewed and approved without change.	
<b>3. COMMUNITY INTEGRATION LEADER (CIL) PROJECT</b>	<p><b>a) Revised <a href="#">Niagara Framework for BSCFC</a></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each site of practice committee (Fort Erie, Fairview Community and the Niagara Aboriginal Children’s Planning Council [NACPC]) has had an opportunity to discuss the framework and provide feedback to the CIL Project team.</li> <li>- The revised framework was distributed to committee members. While there have been several changes to the framework nothing in the original document has been removed, there have only been additions or changes in wording.</li> <li>- All changes to the framework suggested by BSCFCRG were tracked and T. Gartner will make the suggested changes and then send to a graphic designer to produce a final copy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Site of Practice Updates</b></p> <p><b>i) Place Based</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Fairview Community Committee has discussed sustainability planning and alternative funding streams should the Niagara Prosperity Initiative (NPI) Proposal not be approved. While many partners were able to commit to providing services regardless of funding situation certain aspects of the project would need to find alternative funding for some items. Successful NPI Proposals will be notified on April 15<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>- Committee members completed the same dot voting exercise they had done at the beginning of the project to visualize where they were along the integration continuum. The results showed that the committee had moved along the continuum in the short time frame of the project.</li> <li>- An April meeting for the Fairview Community Committee has been scheduled to review the results of the NPI proposal.</li> </ul> <p><b>ii) Non Place Based</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Fort Erie Community Committee will meet tomorrow and discuss sustainability planning should their NPI Proposal not receive funding. The committee is planning a local professional development opportunity which will also be discussed at tomorrow’s meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>iii) NACPC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Aboriginal community’s continued distinctive needs have not changed and a physical centre that will meet the community’s needs is still planned to be built in Niagara Falls that will be based on the Friendship Centre model.</li> <li>- The hired consultant (Catherine Longboat) had the opportunity to go into the community and speak with people</li> </ul>	

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
	<p>who would be essential in this place based location including elders. The consultant's project report is being finalized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The CIL Project has been an important opportunity to test processes with the community and see that In Our Own Voices is still representative of the community.</li> <li>- The CIL Wrap Up Event will be an opportunity for the NACPC to provide mainstream service providers with an update on their component of the CIL.</li> </ul> <p><b>b) Communication Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It was decided that <a href="http://parentdirectniagara.ca">parentdirectniagara.ca</a> would receive funding to complete 8 outlined website enhancements. A working group has been established for the website enhancements and will be meeting next week.</li> <li>- Chimpanzee has been contracted to revamp <a href="http://earlyyearsniagara.org">earlyyearsniagara.org</a>. They are also working with the CIL Project to complete several videos used for the CIL Wrap Up Event that will be placed on the website once complete.</li> </ul> <p><b>c) Professional Development (PD) Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Four professional development opportunities:: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o CIL Celebration Event – The event will be held on April 26<sup>th</sup> from 12:00pm to 4:15pm with lunch provided. Attendees will review key learning from the CIL project and each site of practice committee will provide a short presentation about their committee's key achievements. The event will be held at the Holiday Inn (327 Ontario Street, St. Catharines).</li> <li>o A full day Aboriginal sensitivity training session.</li> <li>o A cultural sensitivity training session.</li> <li>o A session focused on key learnings from collaborative processes from committees/groups affiliated with Early Years Niagara Planning Council (EYNPC).</li> </ul> </li> <li>- All four PD sessions will occur by the end of September 2013 and will be geared towards all levels of staff (front line, middle management, executive director etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>d) Research and Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research report #3 has been submitted.</li> <li>- The post project Network Mapping Survey was distributed on March 18<sup>th</sup>. This, along with the pre project survey results will allow committee members to visualize the growth towards integration that has taken place through the CIL Project.</li> <li>- A post project PSAT survey will be distributed to committee members in April.</li> <li>- The overall findings from these two surveys will be discussed at the scheduled April BSCFCRG meeting.</li> <li>- Committee members will receive an invitation from G. Ressler regarding a lunch meeting on April 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss and collect feedback for research report #4.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4. MEETING TIMES AND COMMITMENT THROUGH PROJECT</b></p>	<p>April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, 11:30am to 2:00pm - <i>Pathstone</i></p>	

# Framework for Niagara Best Start Child and Family Service System

## What can families expect from Best Start Child and Family Centres<sup>i</sup>?

When parents, families and other caregivers enter the doors of a Best Start Child and Family Centre, they will be welcomed into a drop-in, play-based learning environment where all families can meet, share, play, and feel supported. Registered early childhood educators and other early years professionals will facilitate relationships and connections with children, families and caregivers. They will provide environments and experiences that engage children in meaningful exploration through play-based learning, with the intention of helping parents continue these experiences at home.

Trained staff will also support parents by providing them with appropriate information and supports based on their current needs. They will be available to answer questions and provide more specific direction on how to access various resources and services that can help them in the community, such as libraries, health care, family counselling, and children's development programs. For families who need more intensive, specialized or focused support in parenting or other assessment and intervention services, staff at the Best Start Child and Family Centres will provide information about, and help broker access to, other programs and services throughout the community.

## Are we working towards Best Start Child and Family Centres or a System?

In Niagara, we will be working towards implementing Best Start Child and Family Centres which will be actual physical centres. But because of our large geography in Niagara which include rural locations and unique populations we feel as though we must aspire towards an entire Best Start Child and Family Service System which utilizes unique strategies to simplify and facilitate access. Ultimately regardless of where a family enters the child and family system, there should be **“no wrong door”**. This is a community wide approach that we all must commit ourselves to the principles of Best Start Child and Family System in order to be aware of who we all are, what we do, and why we do it.

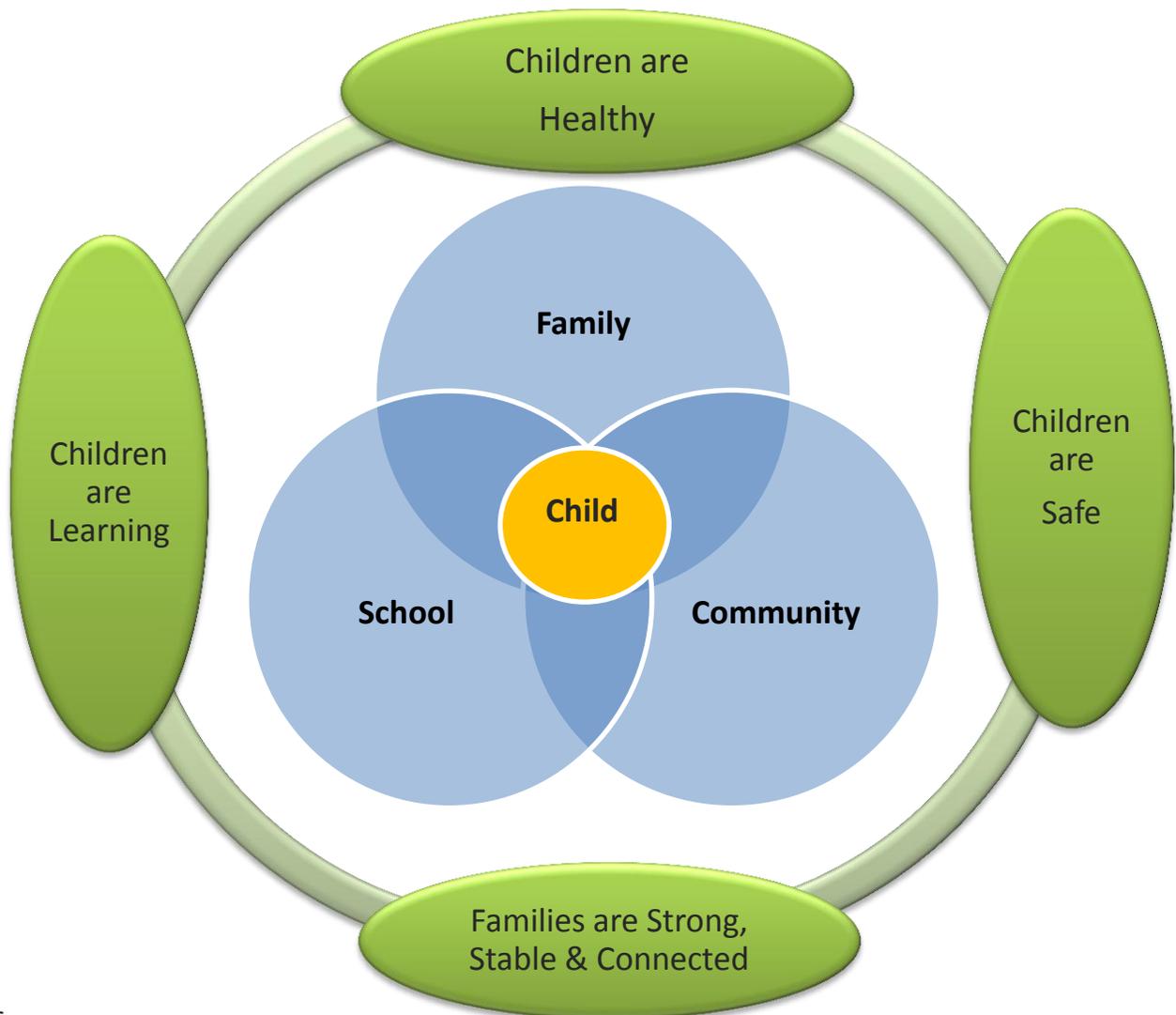
## Why work towards a Best Start Child and Family Service System in Niagara<sup>ii</sup>?

There are many programs and services available that meet the specific needs of children and their families. However, they have typically been developed in isolation, and have not necessarily been connected to other services in their communities. In addition, these services have their own eligibility criteria, intake processes, funding streams, governance and policy approaches to planning for and providing services. As a result, parents are not always aware of the services available in the community, and do not always know where to go to get the help or information they need. Likewise, service organizations themselves may not be linked in any

cohesive or consistent way. This approach is inefficient but, equally important, potentially confusing and frustrating for parents, who often have to “navigate” the system on their own.

### **How will Niagara work to achieve the Best Start Child & Family Service System?**

Niagara regards integration of child and family services and the increased collaboration between service providers as integral to both addressing and supporting the needs of children and their families. Niagara is committed to working collectively to be child focused, child friendly, family centered and community oriented. Niagara understands the importance of supporting children’s optimal development in the early years benefitting our local communities now and in the future. This means that we cannot optimally support children in isolation - children, families, schools and their communities are integrally connected. Maintaining these interconnections at the centre of the vision, sets the stage for children to learn, be healthy and safe and be part of strong, stable and connected families.

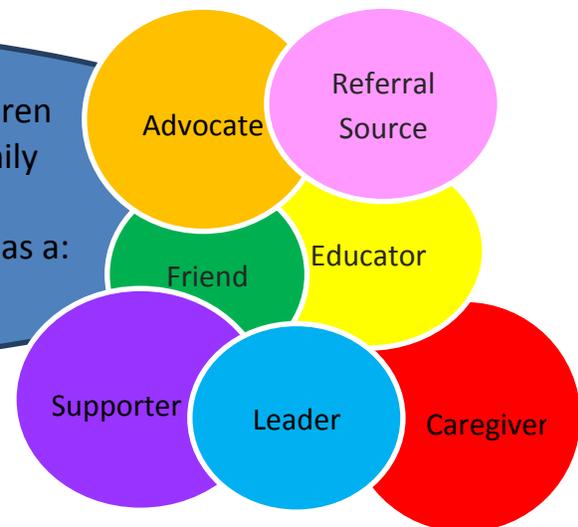


Niagara's Vision for the Best Start Child and Family Service System will be highly visible, inclusive, welcoming and purposefully planned with the community they are serving in order to best support the optimal and holistic development of children and the strength, stability and connectedness of families and communities in Niagara.

### Key Aspects for building a Best Start Child and Family Service System:

- The intent is to have programs and services so well connected that children and families may perceive services as being delivered by one agency, though they may actually be delivered by multiple agencies. **Seamless service** is about connecting in such a way that transitions between different services are eliminated.
- Well-branded, easily identifiable physical or virtual **entry points** through which children and families can become connected to a system of services. Best Start Child and Family Service System or the multiple providers involved in child and family service system integration will function as the entry point to multiple opportunities for children and families.
- **Access processes** are the series of steps through which children and families begin to receive a program, service or support. Access processes are the aggregate of a number of different functions (e.g. intake, screening, assessment, case coordination, case resolution) and vary across sectors.

Our job is to figure out how to best support children and families. Our role in Best Start Child and Family Service System is to be welcoming, inclusive and helpful. This means at times we may need to act as a:



The **Best Start Child and Family Service System** will have a distinctive mix of strategies, processes, and partner agencies driven and developed by the local community. There is no single model of service integration – each initiative is driven by local circumstances and preferences. The best approaches are built on local strengths, opportunities and priorities. When utilizing a strength based approach it means:

- we will coordinate, collaborate and work towards integration together with partnering service providers that share the same philosophy when working with children and families.
- we understand the strengths that our families bring to the community and that they be included not as clients but participants.

### **Niagara Best Start Child & Family Service System is committed to:**

- Providing children and families of **all cultures** with better integrated, inclusive and collaborative early childhood services that are **easy to access** and designed to **meet their needs**.
- **Working together** in new ways that foster trust, promote dialogue and common language to generate input toward joint planning and shared governance which is inclusive of child, family and community participation and which reflects service priorities.
- Expertly **leverage our assets**, including physical space, process and human resources, in order to **avoid duplication**, to **improve service quality**, and to optimize access and equity for families.
- Better understanding and promoting **engagement with families**, especially when self-interest is high, to create **meaningful connections** with families that will help to influence the design and delivery of our services.
- Promoting **professional practice** that is based on **respectful relationships** and a **common service philosophy**, centered on relevant community action research, best practices and focused towards outcomes.
- Paying particular attention to promoting **equality for children and families** considered to be vulnerable, at-risk and/or in need of additional specialized services and supports particularly in underserved areas and disadvantaged communities.
- Ensuring all **staff has the tools, training and knowledge**, including cultural sensitivity, to enable them to assist families to acquire the services they need, when they need them.
- **Respecting** that the Niagara **Aboriginal community** is well poised as **experts in the field of Aboriginal program and service design and delivery**. Niagara Best Start Child and Family Service System is for all children and families. However, we recognize that the Aboriginal population expects services that best address their unique distinctness in Canada. This

includes all areas of: cultural knowledge and language retention, family-community child rearing practices, health and wellbeing and all areas pertaining to quality of life. We acknowledge and support that this population is best served by and through Aboriginal services. We strive for increased awareness of Aboriginal services in order to appropriately and warmly refer Aboriginal families to Aboriginal service providers.

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<sup>i</sup> Ministry of Education (2013). Ontario Early Years Policy Framework.

<sup>ii</sup> Ministry of Child and Youth Services (2011). Building Our Best Future. Realizing the Vision of Ontario Best Start Child and Family Centres. An Update.