

GROWING UP IN A NEW LAND

Strategies for Working with
Newcomer Families



*best start
meilleur départ*

by/par health **nexus** santé



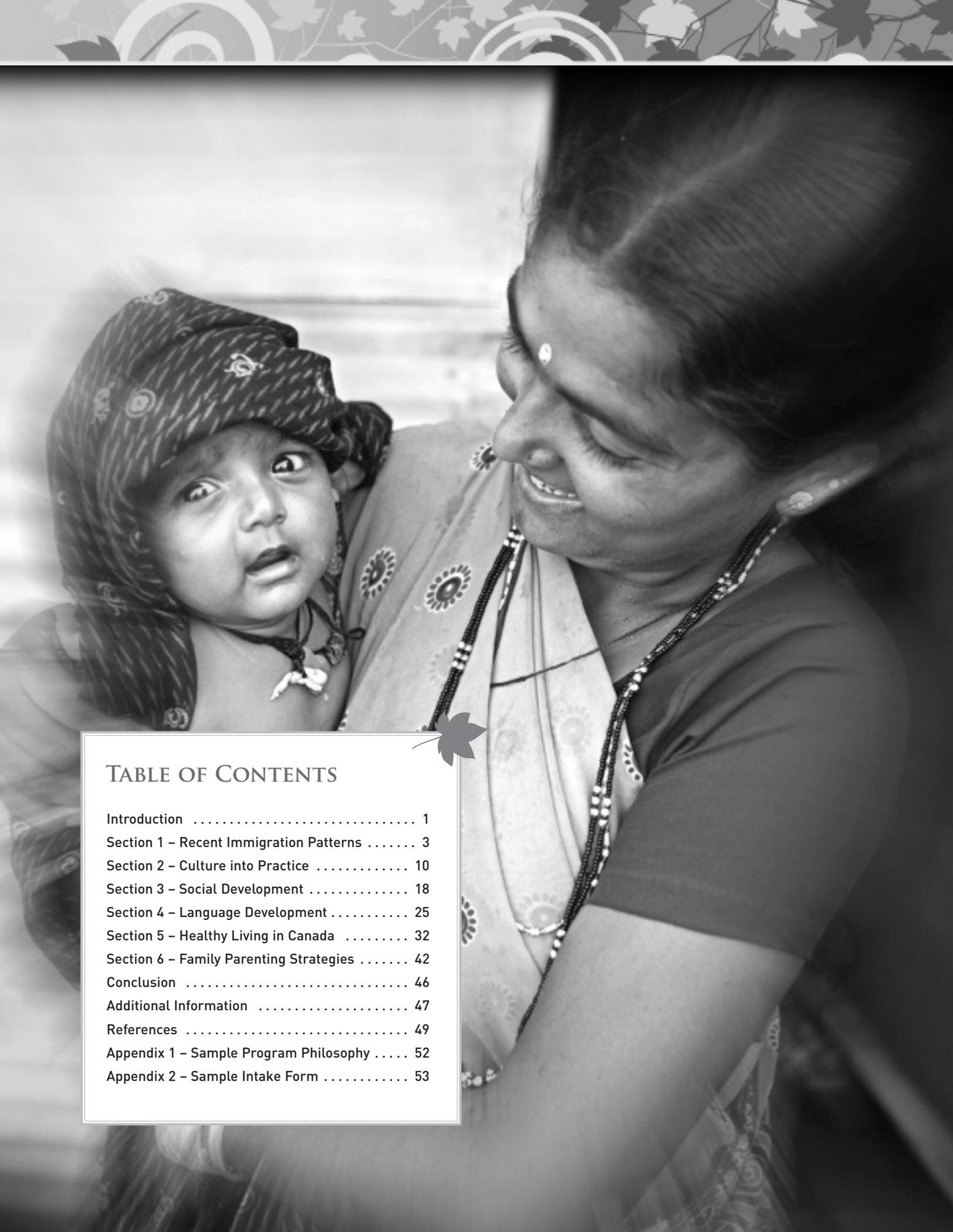


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Advisory Committee

- Alka Burman, Early Literacy Specialist, Human Services, Peel Region
- Dr. Susan Chuang, Associate Professor, Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition, University of Guelph
- Kim Hetherington, Project Coordinator, Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada)
- Susan Hoo, Manager, Childminding, Monitoring, Advisory & Support (CMAS)
- Jennifer Miller, Public Health Nurse, Algoma Public Health

Key Informants

- Donna Boekhoven, Early Childhood Educator, The Postnatal Drop-in Program, Teen Health Centre
- Alka Burman, Early Literacy Specialist, Human Services, Peel Region
- Magdalena Diaz, Manager Family Services and Community Events, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Drop-In Centre
- Kim Hetherington, Project Coordinator, Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada)
- Kobra Hosseinpour, Family Home Visitor, Toronto Public Health
- Maria Milne, Preschool Supervisor, English at First
- Valerie Rhomberg, Manager of Academic Programs, Mothercraft College

- Gena Robertson, Executive Director, SIRCH Community Services
- Dr. Roma Chumak-Horbatsch, Associate Professor, School of Early Childhood Education, Ryerson University
- Gurjit Sangha, Advanced Practice Nurse, Palliative Care, The Hospital for Sick Children

Reviewers

- Saleha Bismilla, Healthy Families Manager, Toronto Public Health
- Sandy Inkster, Early Literacy Specialist, Hands TheFamilyHelpNetwork.ca

Project Lead

Louise Choquette, Bilingual Health Promotion Consultant, Best Start Resource Centre

Disclaimer

The resources and programs cited throughout this guide are not necessarily endorsed by the Best Start Resource Centre. While the participation of the advisory committee and key informants was critical to the development of this Best Start resource, final decisions about content were made by the Best Start Resource Centre.

In this document, children are referred to as both he/him and as she/her, on a random but balanced basis.

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

This guide is for service providers who work with newcomer families who have children aged zero to six. It will help service providers understand the special needs of families that are new to Canada. The resource includes programming suggestions to address these needs. The information in this guide will be useful to a range of service providers, including public health nurses, home visitors, parent-child drop-in facilitators, childcare staff, primary health care providers and kindergarten teachers.

The guide has the following objectives:

- To share research information on the needs of young newcomer children and their parents.
- To help service providers support the cultural identity of the children in their care.
- To help service providers familiarize newcomer families with Ontario practices related to early childhood development.
- To help newcomer families meet their children's developmental needs.
- To help strengthen programming so that it is more culturally competent.

From Immigration Canada's point of view, the term "newcomer" refers to people who have arrived in Canada within the last five years. For the purpose of our guide, the definition is broader and may include families who have been here longer. This is because we wish to acknowledge the strong influence culture may have on child-rearing practices, especially in the context of an extended family.

GUIDE OVERVIEW

The first section of this guide provides general information on immigration patterns in Ontario. This is followed by a section offering suggestions on incorporating culture into day-to-day practice when working with young children and their families. Two sections focus on specific areas of child development: social and language. Although there are other aspects to child development, these two areas are an important focus in transitioning newcomer children to Canadian communities. The next section of the manual focuses on healthy living in Canada, acknowledging the challenges newcomers face related to food, community services, weather,



etc. The last section is dedicated to parenting and offers strategies to support child development within a variety of family contexts. Additional sources of information such as key organizations and websites are also provided.

The manual contains a number of program suggestions offered by service providers across Ontario. They are provided to the reader to help them create programs to meet local needs.

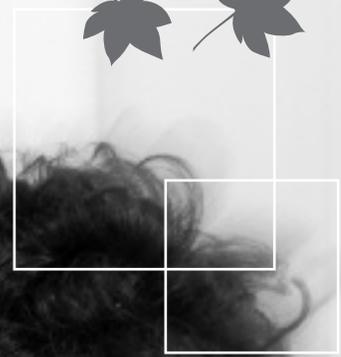
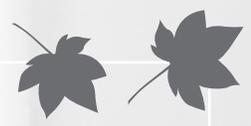
STEREOTYPING AND GENERALIZATIONS

The information in this guide does not apply to all families who are newcomers to Canada and is not specific to individual ethno-cultural communities. It focuses on common concerns that were expressed by key informants.

Since each family has a different personal story and their own values, service providers are encouraged to ask relevant questions and tailor their intervention to meet individual needs.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, discrimination is against the law. Everyone should have access to the same opportunities and benefits and should be treated with equal dignity and respect. It does not matter whether or not discrimination is intentional: it is the effect of the behaviour that is important. Where a rule conflicts with a person's religious or cultural requirements, efforts should be made to accommodate the individual, unless doing so would cause undue hardship, create excessive costs, or pose a risk to health and safety.



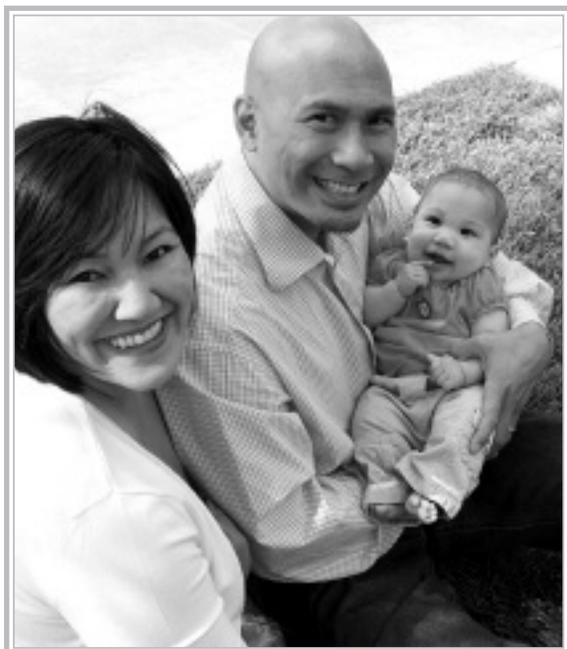
SECTION 1 – RECENT IMMIGRATION PATTERNS

BACKGROUND

Who are the Immigrants Coming to Ontario?

Immigrants to Canada generally fall within the following categories of permanent residents. A permanent resident is an immigrant who has settled permanently in Canada, but has not acquired Canadian citizenship.

- **Economic immigrants.** These immigrants are skilled workers, professionals, investors and entrepreneurs. They generally have the education and experience necessary to help them become economically established, are in good health and have passed criminal and background screening. This group constitutes approximately 53% of Ontario's permanent residents.
- **Family class immigrants.** These immigrants are the spouses, children, parents, etc., of the Canadian Citizens or permanent residents of Canada who sponsor them and commit to support them for a pre-determined period of time. Family class immigrants also need to be in good health and pass criminal and background screening. This group constitutes approximately 31% of Ontario's permanent residents.
- **Refugees.** These people fear persecution in their country of origin or are in need of



protection and have sought asylum in Canada. Each case is assessed individually. Approximately 11% of Ontario permanent residents came here as refugees.

- **Caregivers.** The Live-in Caregiver program is a new avenue through which a small percentage of people may have been granted permanent resident status more recently.
- **Adopted children.** Approximately 2,000 foreign children are adopted by citizens or permanent residents of Canada every year.

In addition, there are people living temporarily in Canada such as temporary workers and students who may have young children and may require services (*Citizenship and Immigration, 2008*).

There are also newcomers who may have immigrated illegally or who have remained in Canada despite the government having issued a removal order against them. This situation has become more common over the past few years and may include tens of thousands of people (*Auditor General Report, 2008, May*). In Canada, the children of illegal immigrants are generally admitted to school.

Although most economic and family class immigrants are in good health, the physical and mental health status of refugees, illegal immigrants and their children may vary greatly.

People come to Canada for a variety of reasons but the common denominator is they all hope for a better future for themselves and their children. Yet, in Canada, there is a well-established link between low income and ethno-racial status. In 2000, 29% of all Toronto children from birth to age five years lived in low-income households and 76% of these children belonged to a visible minority group (*Toronto Public Health, 2007*). While the median income of non-immigrant Canadian families increased by over 5% from 2000 to 2005, the income of immigrant families fell by 1%. Among recent immigrants, incomes fell more than 3% (*Community Foundations of Canada, 2008*). There is no clear information on how their new socio-economic status in Canada compares to their previous socio-economic status in their country of origin, and circumstances may greatly vary in this regard.



CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

In Canada, 25% of births are to women who have immigrated to Canada. Ontario has a higher proportion of births from immigrants than other provinces. In Ontario, 36% of births are to women who have immigrated to Canada (*Statistics Canada – Births, 2004*).

To better meet the needs of newcomer women, it would be useful to know the fertility rates of the various cultural groups of newcomers. The fertility rate is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime. Unfortunately, there are no statistics on fertility rates of newcomer populations.

The fertility rate required to replace the population of Canada is 2.1 and the average fertility rate in Canada is currently approximately 1.5 children per woman. The fertility rate of women from visible minorities in Canada varies greatly. In 2000-2001, the most fertile women were members of the Arab communities, with a rate of 2.6 children per woman. They were followed by the West Asian women, with a rate of 1.54. Korean, Chinese and Japanese women had the lowest total fertility rates, at an average rate of 1.2. The fertility rates of Latin American, Black, Filipino and Southeast Asian women averaged 1.7 (*Statistics Canada, 2006*). Please note that both immigrants and Canadian born women are included in the statistics for each visible minority population.

MIGRATORY PATH AS A DETERMINANT OF HEALTH

It is difficult to assess the vulnerability of newcomer children as each family situation is different. The stories of their migratory paths become their determinants of health. Literature on the topic clearly indicates the higher risks experienced by refugees and refugee claimants (*Battaglini, 2000*). Refugees may have left part of their family behind in their flight from persecution. The children may have experienced trauma or lived in refugee camps (*Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998*). The lack of permanent status for refugee claimants, temporary workers and family members waiting for reunification may also be very stressful. Many of those affected are children (*Canadian Council for Refugees, 2008*).

Refugees are more likely to come to Canada with health issues. Additionally, they face great stress living with their unknown status and the concerns about their family situations. This stress may have an impact on their parenting capacity.

All immigrant families face stress as they start their new life in Canada. Some families have resources to help them cope and some do not. It is important for the service provider to assess the family's situation in order to provide an appropriate level of service.

Some newcomers create their new life in Canada through the rejection of some of the cultural references from their countries of origins, others will reinforce these cultural practices and some will adopt Canadian customs and habits. In most cases, a mix of these three possibilities will take place and each family may develop their own distinctive family culture (Bibeau, 2000).

Each family is unique because of its migratory path, education and level of integration. There are sometimes marked differences between newcomers from an urban setting and newcomers from a rural setting of the same country. Service providers should be careful not to make assumptions about newcomer needs based on their ethnicity (Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 2007).

According to Gopalkrishnan, immigrants generally go through different stages as they settle in Canada. Four phases have been identified:

1. **The honeymoon stage.** Everything appears new and fantastic.
2. **The frustration phase.** Individuals come face to face with the daily problems of living.
3. **The coping phase.** The person can operate in the new society within its cultural and behavioral norms, although they may not be comfortable with them.
4. **The adjustment phase.** The person is comfortable with their environment, and is able to deal with the society around them.

Depending on each person's circumstances, the duration of these phases will vary. It may take many years for someone to become adjusted to life in Canada. Identifying the stage of settlement a newcomer is experiencing will help you to understand their needs and to provide the appropriate level of support.

GENERAL APPROACHES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Service providers may not realize how different their reality may be from that of a newcomer, even if they are immigrants themselves. The following general suggestions will assist service providers in reaching out to newcomer families and form the basis for the specific suggestions provided later on in this document.

APPROACHES	EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE PRACTICES
Ensure that children and parents have an opportunity to express their needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask parents about their immigration experiences (e.g., are they refugees?). • Discuss the goals and dreams they have for their children. • Ask the children what they prefer, what they miss and what they would like (e.g., food, toys, play activities).
Preserve cultural practices and identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the parents to transmit their family traditions to their children, as long as they are safe. • Encourage parents to speak their home language with their children.
Inform parents of local health practices and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform parents about the importance of playing with their children. • Ensure parents are aware of how to access health care services. • Give parents information on how to dress for winter. • Help parents find ways to adapt their recipes to local foods. • Provide parents with information about Canadian legal and social expectations, for example laws regarding child punishment and explain their purpose.
Encourage the building of a social network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out if the families are already linked to an organization or network. • Tell the families about the government funded settlement services they can access. • Offer up-to-date lists of local activities and services for families.
Understand your own cultural values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realize that local customs and practices have changed over time and are not universal (e.g., parenting roles, roles of grand-parents, hygiene).

Adapted from: Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux – Gouvernement du Québec (2007), *Naître ici et venir d'ailleurs*



STRATEGIES

Suggestions related to program planning:

- Establish contact with the settlement services in your area.
- Help parents meet their families' basic needs through partnerships with other organizations. As much as possible, offer a multi-service point where families can access the other programs and services they need.
- Use routines in your programs to help participants with limited language skills understand what is happening and provide reassurance.

Suggestions related to program delivery:

- Be flexible and do not stereotype. Each family has a different background and different needs. There is sometimes more diversity within a culture than across cultures.
- Do not make assumptions about what the parents know or do not know. Find out what they need in order to make informed decisions for their families. Ensure they have the basic information regarding to the following topics: housing, food, income, health care, childcare, schools.
- Keep in mind that some of the behaviour of children and parents may be related to traumatic situations they have experienced in their country of origin or through their migratory path.
- Help parents understand the various agencies and systems in place in Ontario: settlement services, social, educational, health, legal, etc. Clarify the roles of the key agencies and staff they may need to deal with.
- Newcomer parents may require assistance with a wide variety of tasks. This may involve helping them fill out forms, explaining how to access health care services, showing them how to use public transit, etc.
- Inform participants of their rights and parental responsibilities. Clarify that abuse is not tolerated in Canada, under all its forms. Refer them as required.
- Connect new participants with other parents who have similar experiences or similar languages or culture. They will be able to help each other understand your services.





RESOURCES

Settlement.org

The website settlement.org is an award-winning information and referral website for new immigrants to Ontario. Information on the site covers all the basic settlement needs: renting a home, getting employment, getting a health card, registering for school, and much more. It also has a library of guides in more than 30 languages. The website offers an extensive searchable database of settlement agencies across Ontario. These settlement agencies offer employment supports, English as a Second Language classes, help completing government forms, help getting healthcare, and so on. There is also a related website for service providers, to help them assist newcomers: atwork.settlement.org/atwork.

Newcomer Settlement Program

The Government of Ontario supports the Newcomer Settlement Program. Community settlement agencies across Ontario deliver this program to help newcomers get settled in their community, find housing, register their children at school, etc. Information is available at www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/english/keyinitiatives/newcomer.shtml.

Welcome Here

This kit has been developed by The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada). It contains summaries of the lessons learned through collaborations between family resource programs and settlement agencies. Welcome posters, Welcome brochures, multilingual parent resource sheets and Why Play brochures are downloadable at www.welcomehere.ca.

Caring for Canada's Children

A free online professional development course developed by Mothercraft through funding provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The training aims to enhance the capacity of front-line settlement workers to better serve newcomer families with children under the age of 6. The specific focus is on families who have experienced trauma in the process of their resettlement. The website offers a series of 12 classes and 3 summaries at www.mothercraft.ca.

Forging New Ties, Planting New Roots:

A Guide to Canadian Resources for Immigrant Parents of Young Children

This handbook was produced through Ryerson University. It is designed for families who immigrate to Canada with young children and deals with children's health needs, childcare, schooling, as well as programs at libraries and drop-in centres. This is the 2nd edition of the handbook and accompanying DVD and includes a large section of resources for parents to access as they raise their children in Canada. A comic section designed for children and parents to read together is also included. It is available in multiple languages. To obtain copies of this handbook, contact Peter Mak at (905) 513-8208 x1 or send an email to: makcommedia@rogers.com.

Naître ici et venir d'ailleurs

This comprehensive guide is for service providers working with newcomer families. It has been produced by the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux of the Government of Quebec as part of their programming for vulnerable families. It is available in French only from publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/acrobat/f/documentation/2006/06-836-01.pdf.

“Good practice in early learning is good practice, no matter who it is for!”

Valerie Rhomberg, Manager, Academic Programs, Mothercraft College



ACTIVITIES

What's on Your Mind?

The biggest problems faced by newcomer are often of financial or legal nature. Your job may require you to focus on child development issues. It may not be possible for the parent to focus on child development because of more pressing issues on their mind. Encourage the parents to discuss what is on their mind for a few minutes at the beginning of the visit and then focus on child development issues. During those few minutes, try to provide referral information for the parents (such as housing services, legal aid, etc.). The parents will be more able to focus on their child's development if you have listened to their concerns first and they are aware of some options. *From Kobra Hosseinpour, Family Home Visitor, Toronto Public Health.*

Visit by a Police Officer

The English at First (LINC program), in Waterloo, had a police officer come in to visit their program and talk to the children. It was someone who had grown up in another country and who was familiar with the challenges of English learners. This was particularly useful as many children and parents were afraid of police officers due to previous experiences they may have had in their home country. Children were able to understand that police officers are nice people who are there to protect them. *From Maria Milne, English at First.*



PROGRAMS

Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre Outreach in the Early Years (PQCHC)

PQCHC serves a diverse community with a high percentage of new Canadians residing in their catchment. Barriers to service for these families include language, transportation, and knowledge of available services. To increase access to services, PQCHC strives to place programs directly within the community. For example, a drop-in might operate out of an apartment high-rise or within community housing so families do not need to travel to use the program. Culture and language-specific (Arabic and Somali) early years programs are also offered to reduce language barriers and to build community capacity and support while facilitating the development of parental skills. As a Community Health Centre, they have the ability to refer clients to departments within the organization or to community partners to ensure holistic support for families of children zero to six. Further information is available at www.pqchc.com. *From Erica Selschotter, Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre.*



SECTION 2 – CULTURE INTO PRACTICE

BACKGROUND

What is Culture in the Family Context?

Culture encompasses many day-to-day activities that we do without thinking. The way a child is touched, or the way a child is allowed to look at the parents, or talk to their parents, can differ between cultures. For example, in some cultures, it is not appropriate to pat a child on the head or for a child to look directly in the eyes of an adult. Also, parents from countries with a history of dictatorships may not value independent thinking and giving an opinion. In some cases, family members have died from doing this and it is important to acknowledge these differences and understand their origins.

Many challenges arise out of strong beliefs and differing values around family, individuals, gender, and perspectives on health and time. The following sources of conflict can cause opposing attitudes, values and beliefs between parents and professionals:

- **Family:** the role of the extended family, kinship networks and how the family's group welfare is viewed.
- **Individualism:** the continuum of individualism to self-denial for the sake of the family grouping.
- **Gender equity:** roles and responsibilities for decision-making, working, etc.
- **Perception of time:** emphasis placed on productivity, punctuality in contrast to time viewed as flexible, open to change to support human interactions.
- **Achievement and materialism:** work ethic and achievement orientation in contrast to a more spiritual, less competitive orientation.
- **Health and wellness:** degree of cleanliness and hygiene as well as beliefs in cures and treatments.
- **Tradition:** emphasis placed on future orientation and the traditions of the past.
- **Religion:** the range of beliefs that guide behaviour.

(From Invest in Kids website, based on Lynch and Hanson, 1998)

Culture evolves constantly. Someone raised in a different country may choose to keep certain

aspects of their culture and not others, therefore creating their own set of cultural values.

When working with a family, it may be useful to discuss practices in the following areas:

- Feeding practices.
- Sleeping practices.
- Approaches to socialization.
- Beliefs about health, healing and interventions.
- Parent-child interactions (discipline approaches, interdependence and independence, styles of communication, attachment practices and intimacy, etc.).
- Family priorities and concerns.
- Community context (use of services, preferred forms of interactions with the community, accessibility and barriers to systems of support).

(From Invest in Kids website, based on Lynch and Hanson, 1998)

We need to acknowledge that diversity exists in every community. It goes beyond race and ethnicity. Even if a community may appear relatively homogenous, there are still groups within it such as people with disabilities, people of different religious beliefs, people of differing socioeconomic levels, and different sexual orientations. Being culturally competent means being able to work across the entire range of social differences.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY... START WITH YOURSELF

In order to help children learn about and respect similarities and differences between cultures, it is necessary to appreciate how your own cultural background shapes your thinking and beliefs. Think about which of the following statements best describes your goals for children:

Children being independent	OR	Children being interdependent
Children's learning focused on their individual interests	OR	Children's learning focused on preparing them for school (or other family interest)
Open expression of emotions	OR	Controlling emotions and being reserved
Verbal communication is emphasized	OR	Multiple modes of communication are emphasized
Discipline that helps children gain self control	OR	Discipline that teaches children to respect authority
Practitioner-child relationships being relaxed and informal	OR	Practitioner-child relationships being more prescriptive and formal
Scheduled planning	OR	Flexible planning

There are no right or wrong answers, but families of children in your centre, and other practitioners, may have made different choices. Respecting and acknowledging their choices is important.

From: Canadian Mental Health Association – National Office, 2004. Handle with Care. Strategies for Promoting the Mental Health of Young Children in Community-Based Child Care.

STRATEGIES

Suggestions on individual approaches:

- Ensure that you do not stereotype cultures. Make sure your interventions meet individual needs. There is diversity within each cultural group.
- Try to understand cultural traditions. If there is an appreciation of the family's beliefs and values, it may be easier to find a common ground that is acceptable to the family.
- Mention similarities before talking about differences.
- Personally welcome participants, especially new ones. If possible, introduce them to someone from their culture or who speaks their language. If this is not possible, try to find something else parents have in common. If you know some information about the parents, you can help them start a conversation, for example, "You both have a two-year old boy who likes to play with animals."

Suggestions on organizational approaches:

- Ensure your philosophy statement and values are clear to participants. These can be used as needed when there are differences of opinions. (See Appendix 1 for a sample program philosophy from Mothercraft College.)
- Hire staff who understand the needs of the population you serve.

Suggestions on programming:

- Integrate cultural diversity concepts in every day programming, not just for special celebrations. This also applies to centres that service a majority of Canadian-born families, as it will inform them of other traditions, even if these are not currently found in their community.
- Adapt your program to accommodate cultural practices as possible (food restrictions, respect of holidays). It will show the families that their traditions are valued.
- Newcomers may have difficulty adjusting to certain aspects of Canadian culture, such as arriving at a precise time for a program. If possible, integrate some flexibility into your program or find out from the participants what schedule would be convenient for them. Instead of indicating a precise time, use daily routines as a reminder: “The program begins soon after the older kids go to school” or “It starts after the school lunch break.”
- Have the parents provide music from their country of origin (i.e., don’t choose it yourself).

Suggestions for physical setting:

- The physical setting can reflect diversity through pictures, types of seating arrangements, language on signs, toys, etc. People will feel they belong if they see a familiar environment. Participants may be able to donate decorations or furnishings to create this environment.
- In settings where food is provided, consider providing a refrigerated space and microwave to accommodate people who wish to bring in their own food.

Suggestions when working with parents:

- Explore with the parents how they were raised and how their children were raised. This will provide an opportunity to discuss other child rearing practices. You may have to share your own experiences to initiate your conversation. Be curious and ask questions. Remember not to be judgemental.
- Inform parents of cultural child-rearing values encouraged in Canada such as independence, socialization, discussion with children and positive discipline.
- Provide opportunities for all parents, including Canadian-born parents, to discuss their child-rearing values with other parents in a non-judgmental way.
- Offer peer-parenting support with someone from the client’s culture. Newcomers are more likely to take advice from people who share their culture and who have been in Canada for a while.



- Respect the parents' level of comfort in talking about certain topics.
- Take the time to observe how the parents interact with their children, and ask about related practices in the country they come from, before intervening.
- Find out from the parents which cultural practices and traditions they wish to maintain with their children. Are there some they wish to abandon?

Suggestions for communicating with parents in a childcare setting:

- Have a parent intake questionnaire that asks specific questions about touching, food, sleep, habits, etc. (See Appendix 2 for a sample intake form from Mothercraft College.) You may need to help some of the parents with the questionnaire if they have limited English-language skills.
- Ask parents to bring in traditional infant or toddler clothing that they no longer need. These can be used to dress up the dolls or for imaginary play by the children.
- Try to see events from the parents' perspective. For example, it may feel very strange for parents to leave their one year old child for eight hours a day in a childcare centre. This has been normalized for Canadians over the past 30-40 years but it was also very different here prior to that.
- Where ethnic foods are not readily available, consider asking the parents to bring any special foods they want their children to have.

Suggestions when working with children:

- Avoid evaluating a child's development based on his language abilities or his behaviours.
- Have activities and materials that reflect the children in the room and all children of the world: dress-up clothing, pictures on walls, crayon colors for skin tones, pretend foods, etc. This links directly to the children's self-esteem.
- Respond to discriminatory comments quickly. Make it clear that such comments are not appropriate.
- Encourage children to see people as individuals rather than groups.
- Provide opportunities for children to show and explain their cultural practices or teach a few words in their home language to others.
- If you are working in a centre with limited cultural diversity, seek to integrate diversity by doing field-trips to areas where they can learn about cultural traditions. Provide books and toys from other cultural origins to familiarize the children with them.



RESOURCES

Honouring Diversity Through Activities

This booklet provides practical hands-on activities to do with young children and their families to promote diversity and reduce bias. It seeks to help educators and facilitators enable children to have strong self esteem, to feel comfortable with one another, to celebrate differences, and to discover what they have in common. The activities are related to food, art, literacy, geography, identity, etc. The booklet is available at: [www.cdrcp.com/pdf/Anti Bias Resource Booklet.pdf](http://www.cdrcp.com/pdf/Anti%20Bias%20Resource%20Booklet.pdf). From Alka Burman, Early Literacy Specialist, Peel Region.

Does Your Centre Honour Diversity?

This checklist will help you assess if the environment you provide for children and families honours diversity. The checklist is divided by physical areas such as art, block, book, toy, house, music & movement, outdoor areas. The last section covers community collaborations. The checklist is available at: [www.cdrcp.com/pdf/Honoring Diversity checklist.pdf](http://www.cdrcp.com/pdf/Honoring%20Diversity%20checklist.pdf). From Alka Burman, Early Literacy Specialist, Peel Region.

Do You Honour Diversity?

The Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development has created a Self-Assessment Checklist for personnel providing services and supports in early childhood settings. This checklist is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of personnel to the importance of cultural diversity, cultural competence and linguistic competence in early childhood settings. It provides concrete examples of practices that foster such an environment. You can download it from www11.georgetown.edu/research/gucchd/NCCC/documents/Checklist.EIEC.doc.pdf.

Working with Diversity – Question and Answers for Professionals

Invest in Kids developed answers to variety of questions professionals may have when working with culturally diverse family. Available at www.investinkids.ca/professionals/answers-for-professionals/articletype/categoryview/categoryid/16/working-with-diversity.aspx

Attachment Across Cultures

A toolkit for service providers to support parents in maintaining effective attachment practices. Topic areas include:

- Attachment across cultures.
- Beliefs, values and practices.
- The impact of migration.
- Maintaining effective practices.

The manual can be downloaded at www.attachmentcrosscultures.org/about/toolkit_eng.pdf.

 **ACTIVITIES****Repertoire of Traditional Songs**

Some families do not attend programs due to work schedules, weather, transportation or other barriers. Some children may have fewer opportunities to learn songs and the parents may not think of teaching them songs, given other priorities in their life. Home visitors can encourage parents to sing songs they know from their childhood. Write down these songs and provide the parents with a copy. They will often recognize the songs and start singing them to their children. Encourage the parents to display the songs in their home as a reminder. *From Kobra Hosseinpour, Family Home Visitor, Toronto Public Health.*

Same-Sex Family Images and Books

In a parent-child centre, some parents were deeply offended by the portrayal of same-sex families through some of the illustrations and books at the centre. Instead of removing those, the facilitators tried to understand exactly why it was bothering the parents and took the time to explain that they were not trying to influence or impose those ideas on the children but rather just show them such families existed and were acceptable in Canadian society. The facilitators explained that, in the same way that families from different ethnic origins are portrayed, families with different sexual orientation are portrayed and this helped the families understand. *From Valerie Rhomberg, Manager, Academic Programs, Mothercraft College.*

Mapping Your Origins

Prepare an age-appropriate map of the world showing countries of origin of all the children and of their parents, including those born in Canada. You can also use a globe for this. This will help participants feel part of one world and will help them connect with one another. *From Roma Chumak-Horbatsch, School of Early Childhood Education, Ryerson University.*

Holidays and Celebrations

Dealing with holiday celebrations may cause some anxieties for educators and facilitators. They sometimes find it difficult to decide which holiday to celebrate given the great number of potential holidays occurring throughout society. One approach is to extract the common elements of celebrations and work with these: food, family, plants, light and colors. Through discussion with the families or children, a group can develop activities using some of these common elements. For example, they may do red, white and green paintings with sponges in the shapes of foods or plants that the families may have associated with the holidays they had mentioned during their discussions. *From Valerie Rhomberg, Mothercraft College, based on Gallagher, 2005.*



PROGRAMS

The Hospital for Sick Children Policies

The Hospital for Sick Children has numerous policies in place to promote equitable access and treatment for all children and their families. Among them are:

The Family Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

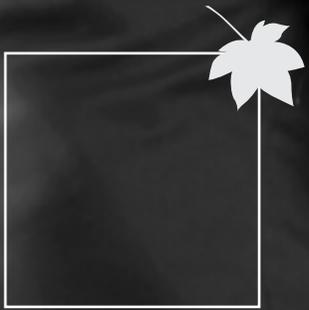
This policy outlines what families are entitled to in regards to appropriate coordinated care, dignity, respect, emotional support, information access, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, health records access and inclusion in the provision of health care as well as what is expected of them when they have children in the hospital.

Complementary and Alternative Therapies

This policy sets out safe procedures for collaborating with families who may wish to use complementary or alternative approaches to their child's care.

In addition to these policies, the Hospital for Sick Children is constantly striving to increase the cultural competence of the clinicians through practical application workshops. *From Gurjit Sangha, Advanced Practice Nurse, and Karima Karmali, Director of the New Immigrant Support Network, The Hospital for Sick Children.*





SECTION 3 – SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

Social development is the process by which a child learns the skills, rules and values that will enable him or her to form connections and function among family members, peers and members of society (*Center for the Improvement of Child Caring, 2009*). Social development is influenced by the environment in which the child grows and the interactions he or she has with family and other caregivers.

Cross-cultural research has indicated the involvement of cultural factors in virtually all aspects of children's socio-emotional functioning (*Chen, 2009*). For example, the North American child-rearing practices encourage the independence of children at a very young age. This may not be the case in other cultures where the interdependence of all family members is more highly valued. Along the same lines, characteristics such as being outgoing and thinking independently may not be valued in countries where people have experienced repression (*Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 2007*).

Research indicates that early experiences of stress and deprivation may have a critical impact on children's development, with life-long consequences for their health and the fulfillment

of their potential. The influences of low socio-economic status and ethno-racial status, two key social determinants of health, may include low birth weight, poor physical health, emotional and behavioural challenges, school and cognitive difficulties, and obesity. Early interventions to prevent or minimize these outcomes are therefore essential (*The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, 2008*).

Some newcomer children, especially refugees, have witnessed traumatic situations that can have a long-lasting impact. Traumatic stress in childhood increases the risk for attachment problems, eating disorders, depression, suicidal behaviour, anxiety, alcoholism, violent behaviour, mood disorders and, of course, post traumatic stress disorder, to name a few (*Perry, 2002*).

A child's development is affected by the child's social, emotional and physical environment. It is therefore important to provide children with a welcoming environment that is free from bias (*Rhomberg, 2007*).

Social development has its roots in the home and gets extended outside the home as the child enters childcare or school. Service providers can assist with the social development of children in all these settings and in the transitions they involve.



STRATEGIES

When talking with parents about Canadian customs:

- Explain to parents the school system. For example, some parents may not be familiar with Ontario Early Years Centres, Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten as these do not exist in their home country.
- Provide activities appropriate to the time of year when they will be needed. For example, there is no point in talking about winter clothing during the summer.

When working with parents on issues of child development:

- Discuss with the parents the stages of development and find out if their perception is different from local expectations. If their extended family is not in Canada, help them find ways to achieve the child development milestones without the guidance and assistance of these family members.
- Provide information on the importance of social skills for their child and how to develop these skills.

- Work with parents to help children through transitions and to build independence. Show parents the benefits of having a child who is independent and able to think for herself in preparation for school. Clarify that interdependence is also valuable in the right context.
- Some parents may not understand the benefits of play-based learning activities. Some parents may not understand the words “play-based activities” as “play” may mean outdoor activities to them. Explain to the parents the value of play and demonstrate some examples to them.
- Provide “hands-on”, experiential activities (e.g., making a book or cooking with the parent and child together).
- Provide parents with “homework” or specific things they can do with their child to foster his development. This may be particularly useful if the child is on a waiting list for special assistance.

When working with parents in their homes:

- If there are older siblings in the house, encourage the parents to play with all of them. The older children can in turn show the younger children socialization through play. Demonstrate play situations with them. Encourage parents to play with their children regularly: hide and seek, crafts, games of imagination, etc.
- In some cases, the parents, and especially the mothers, may not have had access to formal education in their home country. They may need to be taught basic skills, such as organizing by colors and shapes, or adding, in a very practical manner. Show them how to do something, with items you see in their home. Do not just tell them about it.
- Encourage parents to organize play dates for their children in each other’s homes. This will help broaden their social networks. The parents may be able to offer informal childcare or respite care for each other.
- During home visits, emphasize the importance of enrolling in programs such as LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada). LINC is government funded and has free childcare, offering many developmental opportunities for children.

When working with parents in a program setting:

- If you are referring a parent to a program, try to accompany them to the program the first time. Some programs are very busy and the new participants may not feel comfortable at first. When referring families, try to call the program coordinator ahead of time to ensure that this person will be acknowledged, feel welcomed and encouraged to come again the following week.
- Provide food and transportation in a respectful manner, so that participants’ pride is not affected.

When working with children:

- Provide routines. Repeat activities such as circle time, snacks and clean-up songs at predictable times. Children with limited English, or who have experienced chaotic and stressful situations, will feel more secure in a predictable environment.
- Plan around the children’s interests. Learn about their interests by talking to the parents and children.
- Let the children decide what they will play with. The items may not always be “toys” but may be household items or items found outdoors.
- Choose songs that are simple to learn, with lots of repetition and accompanying gestures.
- Where possible, limit staff rotations to help the children bond and feel secure.



RESOURCES

Why Play?

The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada) has developed a series of brochures offering information to parents and childcare providers on play and child development. The brochures are specific to each age group from birth to five years. These brochures are available in 11 languages in addition to French and English: Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Hindi, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil and Vietnamese. They can be downloaded from their website at www.welcomehere.ca.

Child Development Resources for Parents

The Best Start Resource Centre has produced resources to help parents and caregivers support their child's development. The following can be ordered and downloaded from www.beststart.org.

- **Baby Wants...** A booklet designed for parents to encourage them to do simple everyday activities to foster their young child's development: play, read, sing, etc. Available in 10 languages.
- **My Child and I – Attachment for Life.** A booklet explaining attachment and suggesting simple activities the parents can do with their child to foster attachment. Available in 10 languages.



Getting Your Child Ready for School

A booklet has been developed by Malton Guiding Collaborative of the Understanding Early Years (UEY) Initiative in Malton, Ontario. It is called *Getting Your Child Ready for School*. It contains close to 100 practical activities that parents can do to help their children be ready to succeed in school. It was developed with a culturally diverse population in mind and will be adapted to languages other than English in the near future. The booklet can be downloaded at the Peel District School Board's UEY Malton website: www.peelschools.org/maltonkids/index_files/Page5103.htm.

Understanding the Ontario School System

The Government of Ontario offers links to general information for newcomer parents on childcare and school options at: www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/study/OI_HOW_STUDY_CHILDREN.

Starting School

People for Education has developed tip sheets for parents on starting school, on parent-teacher interviews and on related topics. They are available in many languages and can be downloaded at: p4e.linezero.com/resources/tips.html.

Welcome to Peel

The Peel District School Board opened three Welcome Centres, in Brampton, Malton, and Mississauga to welcome new families to Peel. Visitors receive an orientation interview, to assist them in registering their child for school. The parents find out about their role in school and how to help their child succeed, among other topics. Childcare is provided during the visit. www.peelschools.org/englishHTML/welcome.

School's Cool

This 72 hour play-based school readiness program is evidence-based. It helps promote children's excitement about learning, builds their confidence, and increases developmental skills in language, math/cognitive, psychological, social and self-help. The program has two parent sessions that familiarize parents with Kindergarten expectations and activities they can do at home. School's Cool engages the parents and focuses on their strengths and abilities, not on their deficits, which is what all parents need.

School's Cool is often used in conjunction with LINC programs (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) or with parenting programs. According to the research of Dr. Susan Chuang, from the University of Guelph, the program is culturally sensitive to immigrant and other ethnic minority children, ensuring that all children strengthen their developmental skills (Chuang, 2008). General information on School's Cool is available at www.schoolscool.com.
From Gena Robertson, SIRCH Community Services.

Independence vs. Interdependence

The North American culture places an emphasis on ensuring that young children become independent as early as possible, whether it is to feed themselves or put shoes on. Other cultures may put the emphasis on interdependence and see doing something for the child as quality time. The article *Independence or Interdependence* by Janet Gonzalez-Mena objectively explains the value of both options. It is downloadable at: www.ccie.com/library/5011761.pdf.





ACTIVITIES

What Did You Like To Do As a Child?

It is best when both parents participate in child development. As a home visitor or social worker, show the parents pictures of positive parent-child behaviours (bathing, reading, etc.) and have them talk about their own childhood and what they enjoyed doing with their parents. Emphasize that their child needs the same. Provide the parents with pictures of activities they have mentioned and could do with their child. Have them post these on their fridge as a reminder. *From Kobra Hosseinpour, Family Home Visitor, Toronto Public Health.*



Create Your Own Craft

Many newcomer parents cannot afford commercially sold toys for their children. They may, however, have used various products in a crafty way in their country of origin. Encourage the parents to bring household or recycling items to the program (cardboard boxes, tubes, egg cartons, plastic bottles), keeping safety in mind. You can also do this in their homes.

First ask the parents: What do you think you could do with this? Then, have the parents show you something they would do and how they would do it. When the craft is complete, encourage the parents to show their child how to create something similar. If possible, follow-up the next week to find out if they have been able to create a craft together. *From Kobra Hosseinpour, Family Home Visitor, Toronto Public Health.*



PROGRAMS

Ontario Early Years Centres

The Government of Ontario supports a comprehensive network of drop-in centres where parents and caregivers can:

- Take part with their children in a range of programs and activities.
- Get answers to questions.
- Get information about programs and services for young children and their families.
- Talk to professionals, as well as other parents and caregivers in the community.

To find a location and hours of operation of a program near you, visit ontario.ca/earlyyears.

Peel Early Years Hubs and Readiness Centres

Through the Peel Region Early Years Hubs and Readiness Centres, young children and their parents/caregivers learn how to make a smooth transition to kindergarten. The centres function as drop-in facilities for children, from birth to four years of age, who are accompanied by a parent, grandparent or other primary caregiver. Caregivers can learn together in a welcoming, stimulating environment. Families may attend any hub or readiness centre, regardless of where they live in Peel.

Qualified kindergarten teachers choose activities that foster learning and social skills in all children. Sessions last about two hours. Through participation in free play, circle time (chants, finger plays, shared reading, songs, movement), learning centres (activities involving math, science, reading and writing, sand, water and blocks), snack time and gross motor play, the parents/caregivers are preparing their children for school. Hub and readiness centres provide a free service. They are funded by the Peel District School Board through the Ministry of Education. Additional information is available at: www.peel.edu.on.ca/early_years/.

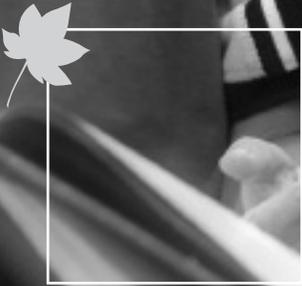
HIPPY

HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) is a home-based education program that teaches parents to be their preschool children's first teacher and prepares their 3-5 year olds for school. The HIPPY program addresses the diverse needs of families who struggle with conditions of poverty and low levels of literacy by helping parents to teach their children at home with easy-to-use activity packets, home visits by professionals, and group meetings. HIPPY takes a holistic approach to education by involving parents and communities. The program promotes multiculturalism and anti-racism, and supports settlement and immigration by helping newcomers to better understand Canadian language, life and culture, develop friendships and a sense of connectedness, and learn to access services in the community. The HIPPY program involves local businesses and other regional organizations to ensure that HIPPY is truly reflective of the communities that it serves. Information is available at www.hippycanada.ca.



Welcome Wagon

Welcome Wagon is a free greeting service for families experiencing a lifestyle change such as moving to a new community or having a baby. Many communities in Ontario offer this service, which is supported by local business people. Welcome Wagon generally offers a visit to the family and provides information regarding the community such as libraries, recreation centres, activities for families, etc. You can refer someone to this service or they can call themselves. Additional information is available at www.welcomewagon.ca.



SECTION 4 – LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

Language development is a key element of child development. It provides the child with a way to form and express his thoughts and feelings. Young children who have problems with literacy and language may be at greater risk for behaviour, learning and health problems (*Hertzman, 1999*).

Language is the most common challenge expressed by service providers working with newcomer families. Service providers find it difficult to communicate with children and parents who do not speak their language. Although it is important for children to learn English or French to function in Ontario, it is also very important for them to develop literacy skills in their home language. For most families, the balance required to juggle more than one language can be an on-going challenge.

Research has clearly established the importance of the home language. Parents should talk to their child in the language they are most comfortable in. This will help the child develop a solid foundation in literacy. If the parents speak broken English to their child, he will not be able to develop his literacy skills to his full potential (*Foundation for Child Development, 2008; www.mylanguage.ca*).

In addition, learning the home language is important for the child to be able to communicate with his extended family and connect to the culture he belongs to.

Service providers need to support the home language of the families while ensuring adequate communication in the program language.

Contrary to what many people once believed, bilingualism does not trigger confusion, has no negative impact on children's development and even has some socio-cognitive advantages. In particular, bilingual children show some advantages in understanding the beliefs of others and the communication needs of their conversational partners. They are better at picking out the important variables needed to solve a problem and at considering two possible interpretations at once. As well, they achieve higher scores than unilingual children on a number of tests such as mental flexibility and non-verbal problem-solving tasks (*Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, 2008*).

Parents and educators should be aware that in the early stages, children who learn two languages may show some developmental lags relative to children who speak only one. However, these lags are typically small and do not last for long (*Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, 2008*).



STRATEGIES

When working with parents, to assist with communication:

- Use communication boards (bulletin boards, blackboards). Use simple key words and drawings as necessary.
- Get help from parents to label containers and pictures in their home language. Having labelling in the various languages spoken in your program, in addition to English, will help the children make the transition to English.
- Reduce the use of written material with parents as it may be intimidating.
- Do not assume that parents are literate in their home language. For example, refugees may have had limited formal education. Use pictorials and provide fridge magnets and calendar stickers as a reminder.

- Post pictures of the daily routines of your centre with the words in different languages underneath. If needed, the educator or facilitator can point to those if they have a question for the parents.
- Try to learn keywords in the child's home language from the families before they leave their child in care. Post them for all care providers.
- Keep in mind that the parents may be familiar with another language that could help them out and for which materials may be more readily available such as French or Spanish.

When working with parents, to support the home language:

- Provide a consistent message to parents regarding home language, English-language and immersion language learning.
- Reinforce the importance of the home language message through your programming: books, signs, pictures.
- Encourage parents to speak their home-language to their children at home, at the program and in public settings.
- Have dual-language books for parents to borrow.
- Have wordless books for parents to borrow.
- Offer workshops or presentations to parents on the importance of the home-language. Ensure that both fathers and mothers are contacted directly.

When working with children:

- Use non-verbal cues to understand the children and respond through body language and appropriate tone of voice.
- Organize the physical space clearly by labelling storage boxes with pictures of the contents.
- Provide consistent programming and staff, especially in childcare centres, where parents are not present. Children with limited language skills will feel more comfortable if there are predictable routines with the same staff.
- Ensure children who are learning English have a good role model to learn from (i.e. not television).
- Use visual displays that can be shown to the child if she needs to express something (hungry child, tired child, cold, etc.).





TWO LANGUAGES IN THE HOME?

Here are some tips you can provide to parents who are raising their child in a bilingual environment:

- **Speak your own home language to your child.** You are a better model for your child when you use the language you know best.
- **Develop a social network that includes both languages.** Attending friendly gatherings, community events and doing other activities with people who speak each language provides opportunities to practice, and reinforces the message that both languages are useful and valued.
- **Ensure that your child develops a strong foundation in the minority language from a young age** by enrolling him or her, if possible, in a childcare program or preschool where the minority language is the primary or only language spoken.
- **Use the local services available in your language** (e.g. doctors, dentists, libraries, community centres, etc). This may involve planning ahead, or travelling a little further, but your efforts will greatly benefit your child.
- **Make sure you have books, videos/DVDs and music in both languages in your home, and that your child is exposed to them.** This reinforces your child's language skills and strengthens your child's appreciation of each of your cultures.
- **Arrange visits to and from family members who speak the minority language.** Stays abroad or visits from extended family can give a boost to the language that tends to be neglected.

From Invest in kids, www.investinkids.ca/parents/answers-for-parents.aspx

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RESOURCES

Community Interpreters

Large programs and organizations sometimes have access to Community Interpreters and smaller and rural services may not. If your organization requires occasional interpretation services, consider establishing a contract with an organization that offers “pay-as-you-go” interpreter services. These organizations offer a variety of services, such as in-person interpretation, phone interpretation and translation of written materials. Here are some non-profit organizations to consider:

- Ontario Network of Language Interpreter Services. A network of agencies offering a variety of interpretation services. (www.onlis.org)
- Access Alliance. Offers in-person and phone interpretation. (www.aais.ca)



Working with Young Children who are Learning English as a New Language

This resource was developed by the Government of Alberta and is intended for early childhood professionals. It will help them understand how children learn more than one language and how to develop effective programs for learning English as second-language. It can be downloaded at education.alberta.ca/media/1093791/earlylearning.pdf.

Tips to Promote Language Development

The First Words Preschool Speech and Language Program of Ottawa developed a number of tips and suggestions to promote language development. These encourage parents to use music, physical activity, play and reading for language development. (www.pqchc.com/firstwords)

Hold On to Your Home Language

The School of Early Childhood Education of Ryerson University has developed a website to raise awareness of the importance of home language retention. In addition to research information, the website offers a brochure for parents titled *If you want your children to succeed, then Hold On to Your Home Language*. (www.mylanguage.ca)

An Alternative to Dual Language Books

Dual language books are great but are sometimes expensive and difficult to find for specific languages. As an alternative, consider buying the same book in many languages. The parents can then help the children read the book in both languages. For example, many children’s books from Robert Munsch have been translated (www.robertmunsch.com). Classic stories have also been translated in many languages.

Picture Communication Tool

This website offers pictures of items or situations that may facilitate communication with children or parents. The pictures can be downloaded for free. (www.picturecommunicationtool.com)



ACTIVITIES

Go to a Library

Libraries are a great place for newcomers to find free information. Organize a field trip to a nearby library and ensure participants have a good understanding of the services offered and the associated costs. Many libraries offer programs for young children. Spend sufficient time to get the participants comfortable in the location, perhaps by having a story-telling circle or similar activity. Encourage participants to get a library card and to visit on their own in the future. A list of Ontario Public Libraries is available at www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/library/oplweb.htm.

Multi-Language Chalkboard

It is sometimes difficult for educators to communicate general information about upcoming activities to parents whose knowledge of English is limited. A creative and inclusive solution was developed in a childcare centre. A chalkboard was used to write key information in English, such as an upcoming field trip or a change of routine. As the parents came into the centre to pick-up or drop-off their child, they were encouraged to write the message in their own language. After a few days, the message became available in a variety of languages. *From Alka Burman, Early Literacy Specialist, Peel Region.*

Workshops for Dads

A study of Toronto newcomer families (Chumak-Horbatsch & Garg, 2006) revealed that mothers are committed to using and maintaining the home language while fathers are more interested in their child's progress in English. Workshops and presentations specifically for dads would help them understand the value and importance of the home language. *From Roma Chumak-Horbatsch, School of Early Childhood Education, Ryerson University.*

SHOULD NEWCOMER CHILDREN ATTEND FRENCH-IMMERSION PROGRAMS?

Many newcomer children can communicate in a home language that is not English or French. In some cases, the children have also acquired English through one of their parents or childcare centres. Would adding a third language such as French, through French-immersion programs, be too challenging for them? According to Shelley Taylor, Associate Professor at the University of Western Ontario, each case has to be evaluated individually. If the following conditions are met, it can be an option:

- *The child is proficient in the home language and it can be maintained.*
- *The child wants it and shows interest in languages.*
- *Language learning is valued by the family environment.*
- *There is support for all the languages in the child's various environments (home, school and community).*

It should be noted that research on French-immersion programs in Canada highlights that expressive skills such as speaking and writing tend not to be as high as receptive skills, such as understanding and reading (Cummins, 1997). Therefore, if parents wish their children to communicate effectively in a language, they need to provide children with the opportunity to also have two-way communication on a regular basis in that language.



PROGRAMS

Welcome Here – Brandon, Manitoba

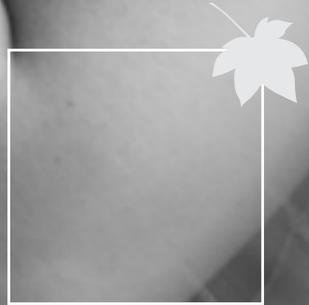
As a result of a provincial government program to attract more skilled workers, the city of Brandon, in Manitoba, had an influx of newcomers. A project was developed through *Welcome Here*, from the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada). The Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre and Westman Immigrant Services decided to offer a combined family literacy and adult language training program as well as community orientation sessions for newcomer families. The family literacy activities were based on themes and concepts such as: numbers and counting; winter and snow; the public library; movement games; the importance of music and books and body awareness. Among other activities, they offered newcomers an orientation to community facilities including the public library. As a result, participants had the opportunity to reduce their isolation and talk with other families about issues they faced. Families developed friendships and made connections in the community. The Welcome Here Resource kit contains additional stories of lessons learned and tools, and is available at www.welcomehere.ca.

The Early Authors Program

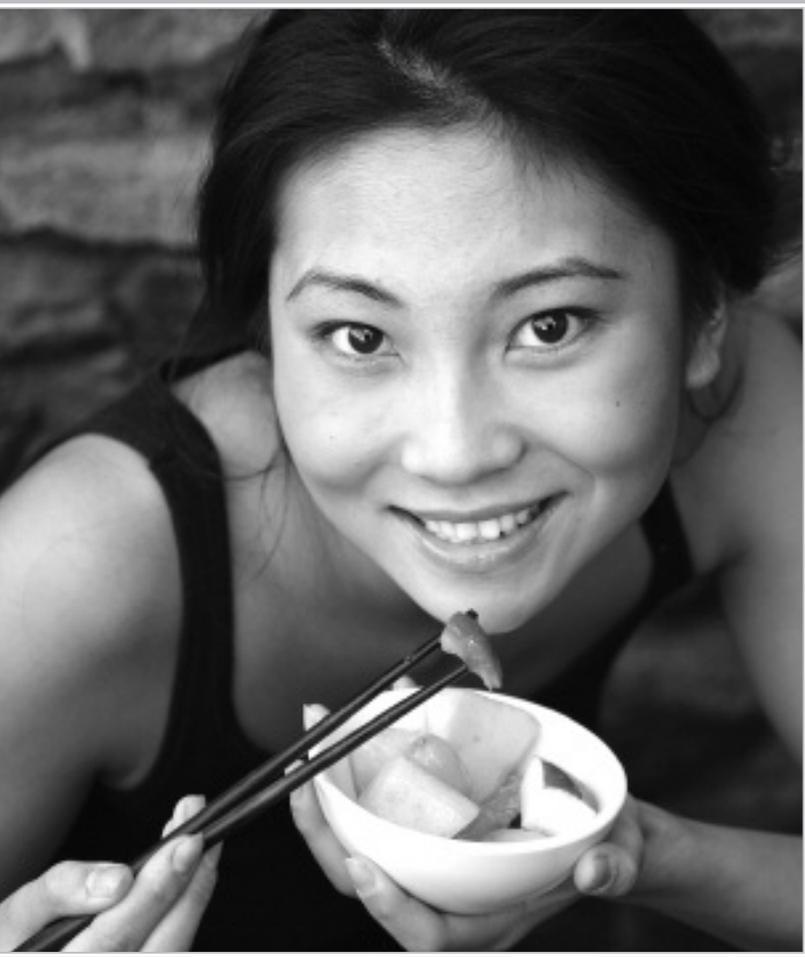
Ryerson University conducted an evaluation of a Florida-based early literacy program delivered at 32 childcare centres. The program involved children under age six in writing their own books in their home language (generally Spanish), created with the help of their parents, teachers and literacy specialists. The children and their families were characters in the self-authored books. Additional activities such as learning about the technology of making books, sharing the stories and frequent reading were also part of the program. The evaluation results showed great gains in literacy measures, especially for children age 3 and 4. (*From Bernhard et al, 2008*).

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program

The Parent-Child Mother Goose Program provides a group experience for parents and their young children that focuses on using rhymes, songs, and stories together. Parents gain the skills and confidence to help them create positive experiences with language and communication during their children's early years. Parents are encouraged to share their language and culture. The program can be an important bridge and respects and draws on oral stories and rhymes from around the world. The program is free and has been used in a variety of settings, including immigrant and refugee support centres. Information is available at: www.nald.ca/mothergooseprogram.



SECTION 5 – HEALTHY LIVING IN CANADA



BACKGROUND

When they arrive in Canada, immigrants are generally in better health than Canadians (Hyman, 2007). This is due to the screening guidelines and to the fact that healthy people are more likely to emigrate (Oxman-Martinez et al, 2000).

Refugees and their children, however, may be in a different situation. They may have experienced malnutrition and survived torture and trauma. As a result, their physical and mental health may be precarious (Canadian Council for Refugees, 1998).

Newcomer families face many challenges when arriving in Canada and staying healthy is one of them. Recent research on health transitions suggests that immigrant women, low-income

immigrants, and recent non-European immigrants are at an increased risk of transitioning to poor health. Some immigrant sub-groups experience a high risk of cancers, diabetes, and heart disease. This may be due to genetic predisposition or changing environmental factors (Hyman, 2007).

The 2003 Toronto Perinatal and Child Health Survey (PCHS) found that parents not born in Canada were almost twice as likely to report that their children were in poorer health as compared to parents who had been born in Canada, after accounting for household income. Differences in immigrant parents' rating of their children's health status were also found based on the length of residency in Canada, with 21% of recent immigrants reporting their children to be in poorer health compared to 13% of non-recent immigrants (Toronto Public Health, 2006).

Service providers can help young children stay healthy by encouraging families to develop healthy habits related to nutrition, physical activity, sleep and sedentary activities. Here are some guidelines related to these areas:

- Breastfeeding is the best food for optimal growth and development. Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended until six months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond (World Health Organization).
- All homes, parent-child programs and childcare centres should follow Canada's nutrition guidelines, *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. It contains relevant information for various age groups. The guide has been adapted in many languages and is available at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/.
- Families with food security issues should be linked to appropriate services. Providing information on healthy eating may not be enough. Let clients know how to access food banks and other local food security programs. Encourage and support all women to breast-feed as an important aspect of food security for the entire family.
- All children from birth to age five should engage daily in physical activity that promotes

the development of movement skills. There are currently no Canadian guidelines regarding the amount and type of physical activity necessary for children under the age of six. Guidelines have been developed in the United States and these are generally accepted in Canada. These guidelines suggest that preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity each day (30 minutes for toddlers). In addition, they should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day of unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time, except when sleeping. These guidelines and a complementary document provide practical suggestions for parents and caregivers to help meet the guidelines are available from www.aahperd.org/naspe/standards/nationalGuidelines/ActiveStart.cfm.

- Most young children are exposed to a significant amount of television and other media. According to the Canadian Paediatric Society, television watching should be limited to less than 1 to 2 hours of quality programming per day. Parents need to be made aware that time spent in front of the television limits children’s time for vital activities such as playing, reading, learning

to talk, spending time with peers and family, storytelling, participating in regular exercise, and developing other necessary physical, mental and social skills (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2009).

- Children need sufficient sleep for optimal growth and development. The Canadian Paediatric Society offers the following general guidelines, acknowledging that some children may have different needs:

Newborns (birth to 6 months)	16 hours a day
Older babies (6 months to 1 year)	14 hours a day
Toddlers (1 to 3 years)	10-13 hours a day
Preschoolers (3 to 5 years)	10-12 hours a day

Service providers need to be sensitive to the fact that meeting some of these guidelines can be very challenging for newcomers given the socio-economic conditions they live in. The suggestions offered to families must account for this and provide realistic ways to overcome these barriers.

ACCESSING HEALTH CARE SERVICES

- *During their first 3 months in Ontario, newcomer children are not generally covered under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). They need to have private insurance. Information on OHIP is available at www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/ohip/ and through ServiceOntario at 1-800-267-8097.*
- *Before OHIP coverage begins, it may be possible to receive some health care services at community health centres (www.aohc.org).*
- *If the parent has short-term OHIP coverage (for example, through a work permit), their children will generally be covered for the same length of time.*
- *Refugees can get emergency and essential health services through the Interim Federal Health Program (www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/interim_health.shtml).*

The website www.settlement.org provides detailed information on health coverage for immigrants.



STRATEGIES

General suggestions on health:

- Find out from the parents what their perception of a healthy child is and discuss ways to promote the health of their children.
- Help the parents, grandparents and other caregivers find strategies to reduce the amount of time children in their care spend watching television. Mention that role-modeling will be helpful.
- Provide activities that promote healthy living after regular program hours. Good times for parent-child activities are at pick-up times, including a meal as possible.
- Ensure parents know how to access health care services, including Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000). Telehealth Ontario offers interpretation services and OHIP coverage is not necessary.
- Provide parents with information on child immunization schedules for Ontario. Let parents know it is important to keep a record of their child's immunization for school entry. Immunization fact sheets are available in many languages at www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/pub/pub_menus/pub_immun.html.
- Talk to parents about the amount of sleep needed by young children and about how to help their children sleep well.

Suggestions related to safety:

- Discuss child safety topics with parents. Talk about how to prevent unintentional injuries. For example, offer a workshop on child equipment, water or ice safety.
- Help parents understand the labelling of household products. Increase parent's awareness of environmental health issues.
- Link parents to local services that offer car seat installation and verification.
- Babies and toddlers who have been bed-sharing with their parents may have difficulty adjusting to sleeping in a crib. In a childcare centre, the educator may need to comfort the baby longer to help him go to sleep and then transfer him to a crib.



Suggestions related to hygiene:

- Find out what practices families have related to child hygiene and discuss with the parents the local customs and safety recommendations related to bathing babies and young children.
- Some newcomers may have difficulty accessing clothing for their children, especially outdoor clothing. Keep a variety of extra outdoor clothing and shoes in your centre. This includes underwear and socks. Put in place a plan to wash these regularly.

Suggestions related to physical activity:

- Ask about the activities that families enjoy doing together. Reinforce the importance of family activities.
- Go with the parents and children to a nearby playground at various times of the year. Play with the children to role-model appropriate parenting skills.
- In addition to outdoor activities, offer indoor, low-cost opportunities for active play, such as catching rolled up socks, playing parachute with a blanket, etc.

Suggestions related to nutrition:

- Find out if the parents have difficulty accessing healthy foods. Find out if the parents know how to prepare local foods. Offer support and programming according to needs. For example give a presentation on the nutritional value of local foods or a cooking workshop. Provide information about stores that may carry foods they are familiar with.
- Invite a representative from the local food bank to explain their services.
- Find out if the families have food restrictions or preferences due to their culture or religion. When possible, use that information in meal planning and programming.
- Use food as a uniting element, not a dividing one. Try to offer foods that meet the various religious requirements of your clients and also use the opportunity to have the families try new foods.
- Show the parents how to make baby food.
- Many cultures have different mealtimes than Canadians are accustomed to. Find out what would be most convenient for the majority of families and try to accommodate, within your program limitations.
- Offer a group outing to a grocery store where culturally specific food items are available. Purchase some and try them with the group.



Suggestions related to breastfeeding:

- Find out from the parents about cultural practices regarding breastfeeding. Encourage mothers to exclusively breastfeed for six months and to continue breastfeeding until the baby is two years old and beyond.
- Organize your physical environment to support mothers who wish to breastfeed at your centre. You may want to offer some discreet areas that are not specifically labelled as breastfeeding areas, for mothers who prefer some privacy while breastfeeding.

- Inform the partners and extended families of the benefits of breastfeeding and the importance of their support to the mother in this regard.
- If the mother experiences problems with breastfeeding, refer her to a public health nurse or a lactation consultant and put her in touch with a breastfeeding support group.
- Encourage parents to share breastfeeding suggestions, especially regarding breastfeeding outside the home.

Suggestions for healthcare settings:

- In healthcare settings, it is particularly important to have access to interpreters at all times. Emergency situations are generally emotionally charged and language barriers need to be minimized.
- When asking about medical history, avoid just using the word “medication” as it may be understood as prescription drugs only. Use the words supplements, teas, herbal drinks, vitamins, etc, to ensure complementary therapies are also included.
- Provide a multi-denominational prayer area for families.
- Make cultural information available to the interdisciplinary teams.
- Provide a supervised space for children to play while the parent or child who is sick interacts with the health care provider.





RESOURCES

Facing the Challenges – Healthy Child Development

Internationally adopted children may have spent the first years of their life in orphanages and will need additional medical tests to identify conditions requiring treatment. Hepatitis, rickets and anemia are some of the medical conditions to watch for. Giardia, scabies or parasites may be found in some of the children. Head circumference measurements and charting of the child's height and weight can help to identify developmental concerns. For an outline of medical tests recommended in international adoption, see Facing the Challenges – Healthy Child Development, an Interdisciplinary MAINPRO CME for Family Physicians and other Primary Healthcare Providers, available at: [www.cfpc.ca/local/files/CME/Healthy Child Development/Healthy Child Development Facing the Challenges Level 2Manual.pdf](http://www.cfpc.ca/local/files/CME/Healthy%20Child%20Development/Healthy%20Child%20Development%20Facing%20the%20Challenges%20Level%202Manual.pdf).



Turning Off the TV

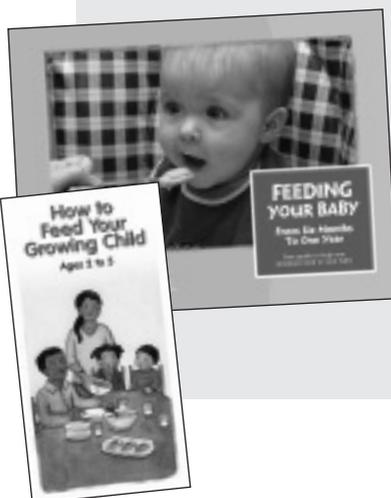
It is often difficult for families to reduce the amount of time their children spend watching television. Some resources and programs have been developed with that purpose in mind:

- **TV Turn-Off Week** is organized each year in the spring and in the fall through the Center for Screen-Time Awareness. The website provides suggestions for alternative activities. www.tvturnoff.org.
- **Big Screens, Little Mind.** The Family Place Parent Child Centre has created a handout for parents and caregivers on the topic of television and its impact on child development. You can download it at [www.the-family-place.org/CONTENT/Articles/television and brain development.pdf](http://www.the-family-place.org/CONTENT/Articles/television%20and%20brain%20development.pdf).
- There are some commercially available books that offer TV-free activities such as crafts, guessing games, manipulation activities, etc. The local library may have activity books for children.

Nutrition and Physical Activity Resources for Parents

The Best Start Resource Centre and the Nutrition Resource Centre have developed resources to provide information to parents of young children. The following resources can be downloaded or ordered from the website www.beststart.org.

- **Feeding Your Baby: From six months to 1 year.** This resource is designed to help parents introduce their infants to solid foods.
- **How to Feed Your Growing Child.** A low-literacy resource that provides information on feeding children from age two to five.



The Nutrition Resource Centre at the Ontario Public Health Association has also created a series of resources for parents.

- **Busy Bodies.** A “stand-up booklet” containing activity cards to help parents and caregivers bring healthy eating and physical activity to life with preschoolers.
- **Eat Right Be Active: A guide for parents and caregivers of children age 12 to 30 months.**
- **Eat Right Be Active: A guide for parents and caregivers of children age 3 – 5.**
- **How to Build a Healthy Preschooler.** Provides information on feeding children from age three to five. Available in six languages.

All these resources can be downloaded from ontario.ca/eatright and ordered from <https://www.publications.serviceontario.ca>.

Have a Ball Together is a website that provides parents and caregivers with ideas for physical activities they can do with their young child. www.haveaballtogether.ca.

Dressing for Winter

Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program has developed a short video clip with basic information on how to dress for winter. The video is an animation and does not contain spoken words, therefore making it multilingual. It can be viewed or downloaded from settlement.org/sys/library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004151.

Giving Birth in a New Land

The Best Start Resource Centre has produced two resources on the reproductive health of newcomer women:

- A service provider manual that shares strategies for offering culturally competent services.
- A booklet for pregnant newcomer women that shares information on what to expect and the services available.

Both documents are available from www.beststart.org.



Health Information for Children

The Hospital for Sick Children is developing materials in languages other than English for the families of their young patients. This information will be available at aboutkidshealth.ca. From Karima Karmali, Director of the New Immigrant Support Network, The Hospital for Sick Children.



ACTIVITIES

Go to a Recreation Centre

In most areas, a variety of recreational activities are provided to young children through municipal recreation centres or non-for-profit centres such as YMCAs. As a service provider, there are a number of ways you may be able to help families to access these services:

- Offer a field trip to a recreation centre to familiarize the parents with the services available.

- Partner with a recreation centre to offer occasional joint activities such as a trike-a-thon (children can use an arena off-season with tricycles) or ball-a-thon (a variety of ball games are done in a gym).
- Find out about subsidies available to low-income families. Many centres have funding available or offer subsidies through a community foundation.
- Partner with a local business or a business association to subsidize occasional events at a recreation centre (similar to Tim Horton's Free Holiday Skate, www.timhortons.com/ca/en/difference/local-programs.html).

Offer a Cooking Workshop

A cooking program can be offered through a parent-child centre. Here are some suggestions for a multi-day program:

- Provide copies of grocery food flyers and discuss recipe ideas while comparing costs. Encourage the children to make crafts with the pictures of the foods.
- Build a grocery list to prepare a chosen recipe from foods that are available locally. Focus on foods available at a reduced price. Plan complementary dishes to make optimum use of the food.
- Organize a group outing to a grocery store to purchase the items necessary. While in the store, compare the nutritional value of the foods.
- Prepare the recipe, involving the participants as much as possible in the preparation. Discuss safe food handling and conservation methods used in Canada.
- Enjoy the food prepared!



PROGRAMS

Peer Nutrition Program

The Peer Nutrition Program is a free Toronto Public Health program for parents and caregivers within the diverse cultural communities in Toronto. The goal of the program is to improve the nutritional status of children between the ages of six months to six years. Workshops and support groups are offered in more than 25 languages by staff who have come to Canada from various countries and understand first hand the stress of feeding a family with foods that are unfamiliar. The Peer Nutrition Program assists parents with food budgeting and offers culturally appropriate multilingual infant, toddler and preschooler feeding guides and nutrition fact sheets. Additional information, fact sheets in multiple languages and adapted recipes are available at www.toronto.ca/health/peernutrition/.

Little Chefs at the Dixie-Bloor Neighbourhood Centre

The program Little Chefs has been a big success and has a waiting list. Five cooking sessions are provided for parents and children aged three to six. The children cook with the assistance of their parents. Each session is one hour and is offered at 6 p.m., therefore providing a meal for the families. The program has a strong educational component regarding food safety and nutritious meals. They draw from family experiences and favourite dishes. In some cases, the facilitators adjust the recipes to provide for a balanced meal that follows Canada's Food Guide. The families learn about ways to cook local foods and find out where they may be able to purchase some of their traditional foods. The organizers provide information on the cost of the meals and aim to offer meals for less than \$1 per person. Occasionally, additional family members such as older siblings are part of the program, depending on their specific circumstances. *From Magdalena Diaz, Dixie Bloor Neighbourhood Drop-In Centre.*

Petits marmitons – Centre francophone de Toronto

This program is offered on Saturday mornings and afternoons, once a month, to parents accompanied by children two to six years old. Each session features nutritional information and a recipe, as well as a physical activity component. During the session, a dietician provides general information on nutritional value, types of fat, food labelling, etc. The recipes are selected or adapted to accommodate the various religions and cultures of the program participants. Because it is offered on Saturdays, the program has been a good way to reach out to parents who work during the week. *From Georgette Khan, Centre francophone de Toronto.*

Play Park at The Hospital for Sick Children

The Play Park at The Hospital for Sick Children is a project of the Women's Auxiliary in partnership with the Canadian Tire Foundation for Families. It is a safe play area for brothers and sisters of the young patients. Parents are welcome to leave children at the Play Park while they visit a child in hospital, talk to their child's doctor, or take a break between clinic appointments. This is particularly useful for parents with a limited social and family local network, such as newcomers. Among other things, the space offers an area for crafts, a computer gaming space and many games and puzzles. There is no cost to use the Play Park. The Play Park is staffed by Women's Auxiliary volunteers and Early Childhood Education graduates. Additional information is available at www.sickkids.ca/ProgramsandServices/The-Play-Park/index.html. *From Gurjit Sangha, The Hospital for Sick Children.*

Transcultural Paediatrics Clinic

The hospital Maisonneuve-Rosemont is located in Montreal, where approximately 26% of the population are immigrants. Approximately half of these immigrants are under age 24. The hospital has put in place an interdisciplinary team called the "Clinique pédiatrique transculturelle" to assist children and their families experiencing adaptation difficulties in Canada. The team is made up of a Child Psychiatrist, a Nurse Practitioner, a Psychologist, Paediatricians, a Social Worker and a Family Physician. The role of the team is two-fold: to help the newcomer children and to educate the hospital staff regarding cultural issues. The team meets four times a month for two to three hours. Specific cases are discussed at the meetings, in the presence of the families concerned. The families can speak in their home language, with the help of an interpreter. Intervention plans are developed at these meetings, to meet the specific needs of the children. Additional information is available at biblio.hmr.qc.ca/Publications_pdf/C/clinique_pediatrique_transculturelle_sfe040.pdf.



SECTION 6 – FAMILY PARENTING STRATEGIES

BACKGROUND

Parenting is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child. Parenting includes a wide variety of responsibilities such as loving, nurturing, protecting, fostering development, communicating, establishing healthy habits, developing autonomy, promoting positive behaviour, establishing family routines, etc. All families develop their own way of raising their child, based on their experience and knowledge.

In their home countries, newcomer parents may have had their own parents, relatives and friends to help them raise the children and guide their decisions. In many countries, relatives care for young children while the parents are at work.

The experiences of immigrant parents may make it difficult for them to meet their young children's needs, or to help their children in their new environment. The parents may lose their sense of self-efficacy in their parenting role when their social, emotional, cultural and financial resources are reduced (*Ali, 2008*). Parenting programs need to do more than transmit information on how to parent. Programs also need to help the

parents build their confidence in parenting and familiarize them with local customs.

Newcomer couples may have two different cultural backgrounds, and need to negotiate child-rearing practices such as co-sleeping, language, discipline, nutrition, independence, etc. Each family has unique needs and therefore, needs unique solutions (*Caballero et al., 2008*).

Developing and implementing parenting programs for newcomer families can be challenging, particularly when many cultural groups participate in the same program. In addition, there can be as much variability in parenting beliefs and practices among families belonging to the same cultural group as there is between families in different cultural groups (*Mann, 2008*).

Some newcomer families have members of their extended family in Canada who may have the responsibility of caring for the children part of the time. In many cases, the extended family lives with the parents and children. It is important to offer the families some family parenting strategies, so that the children grow up in a home environment with consistent rules and expectations.



STRATEGIES

Suggestions on program planning:

- Provide effective two-way communication with the families. What are they interested in? Involve the families in program planning and encourage them to volunteer for part of the program. By giving them some responsibility, they are more likely to continue to be involved.
- Try to reach all of the caregivers working with a child. It may be possible to do this by transmitting written material in a language the caregivers can understand or by inviting them to a workshop at a convenient time. You may need to repeat the workshop to reach all caregivers.
- As much as possible, connect with other service providers who work with the child (e.g. JK-SK teacher), to see if there are ways to offer a consistent approach on certain issues such as self-sufficiency, negative behaviour, etc.
- Make connections through local LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada). Through the LINC programs, parents can get access to English classes and learn about settling in Canada, including parenting issues.

Suggestions on program delivery:

- Emphasize to parents and families that there isn't a "best way" to raise a child but that they need to be comfortable with the decisions they make and be consistent.
- Be open to learning from the parents because they know their child best.
- Observe the parent-child relationship before stepping in, unless the child's health or safety is at risk. At first, it may be better to let the parents do things their way, even if it contradicts local practices. Once the parents have your trust and they know that you want their child's well-being, you can gradually suggest changes.
- Help parents of mixed cultural heritage negotiate the child-rearing practices they wish to establish for their child. Encourage parents to view their differences as personal choices rather than cultural choices, as it will make accommodation easier.



RESOURCES

Parents Matter

The Parents Matter website, developed by The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada), offers an inventory of parenting programs that have a focus on young children. As well, it offers resources for parents and for facilitators. Links are provided to parenting sites, research sites and materials for parent education. The site also contains a directory of family resource programs to help you find support in your own community. (www.parentsmatter.ca)

Parenting with the Zap Family

This 49-minute video from Invest-in-Kids may be useful for groups of parents who have difficulty reading English materials. It will help them reflect on typical parent-child scenarios and learn effective strategies to deal with similar situations in their own lives. (www.investinkids.ca)

A Simple Gift

Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMP) at the Hospital for Sick Children has produced parenting education resources on responding to young children positively to promote healthy social and emotional development. The titles are *Comforting your Baby*, *Helping your Young Child Cope with Feelings* and *Ending the Cycle of Hurt*. The videos and illustrated parent guides contain clear language and are suitable for caregivers from many cultures. The professional guides provide theoretical information as well as practical strategies and tips for presenting the videos to parents. (www.sickkids.ca/IMP/A-Simple-Gift)

Parenting and Child Discipline

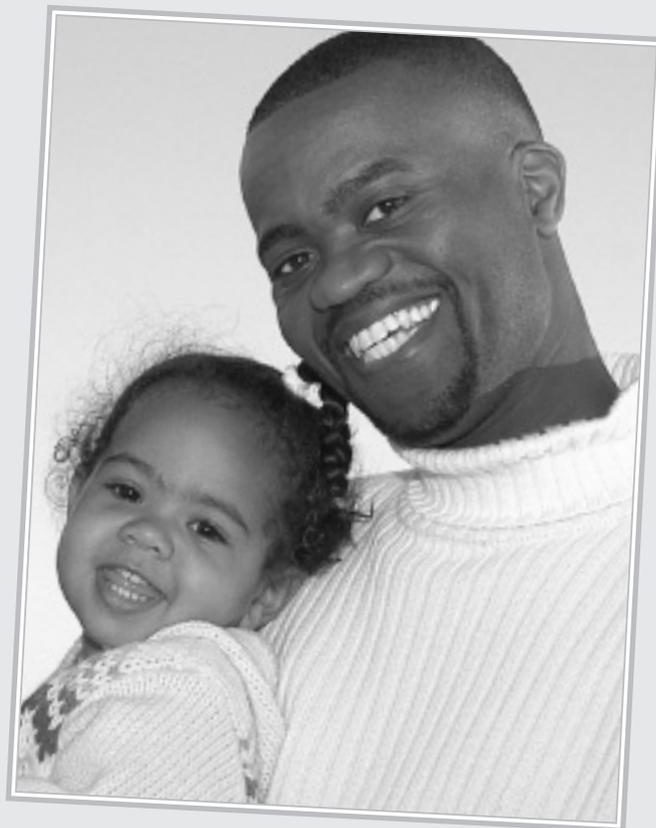
- The Child Welfare League of Canada has produced a resource for parents related to discipline. The title is *Be the Best Parent You Can Be – Why Positive Discipline Works*. It is available for download in 11 languages. www.cwlc.ca/en/projects/ppes.
- The Family Violence Prevention Unit of Health Canada has developed a booklet titled: *A Booklet for Service Providers Who Work with Immigrant Families on Issues Relating to Child Discipline, Child Abuse and Child Neglect*. It is available in French and English through the Public Health Agency of Canada. www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/nfnts-serviceproviders_e.pdf.

The Father Toolkit

Research consistently highlights the importance of father involvement in child development. It is often difficult for fathers to attend parenting programs. The Father Toolkit was developed to reach a wide variety of fathers and many of the suggestions can be applied to reaching newcomer fathers. A section of the manual deals specifically with adapting programs to reach fathers from various cultural groups. You can download the manual at www.mydad.ca/tool-kit.php.

Raising Children in a New Country

This downloadable handbook is for newcomer parents of young children, to help them understand some of the main child-rearing practices in North America. The book has a simple layout and pictures that clearly show the behaviours. Note that the book is from the United States, so some information may not be applicable. It can be downloaded from www.brycs.org/_cs_upload/documents/1861_1.pdf.





ACTIVITIES

Information Session on the Legal Aspects of Parenting

The Postnatal Drop-in Program in Windsor invited the Children’s Aid Society to discuss legal aspects of raising a child in Canada with newcomer parents. This was very popular among the newcomer parents who were not always aware of the Canadian laws on child abuse and on supervision of children. This presentation was also balanced by regular information offered to the parents on positive discipline strategies and these behaviours were reinforced in the drop-in. *From Donna Boekhoven, Teen Health Centre – The Postnatal Drop-in Program.*

“It is sometimes difficult to measure success so soon after the moms leave the program as, in our program, the baby is only three months old. For me, success is when a parent visits or drops by a few years after taking part in the program and proudly tells me how well her child is doing and how their life has improved. That is the best reward.”

From Mira Nikolovski, Parkdale Parents Primary Prevention Project.



PROGRAMS

Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)

CAPC projects are located in many areas of Canada. They provide support and information to parents living in difficult socio-economic conditions to help them raise their children.

The programs include established models (e.g. family resources centres, parenting classes, parent-child groups, home visiting) and innovative programs (e.g. street level programs for mothers who struggle with substance use). For additional information and a list of locations, visit www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/programs-mes/capc_main-eng.php.

Nobody’s Perfect

Nobody’s Perfect is an education and support program for parents of children from birth to age five. It is designed to meet the needs of parents who are young, single, socially or geographically isolated or who have low income or limited formal education. It is strength-based and designed to increase the parents’ confidence. The program has been used with a wide variety of groups, including newcomers, since 1987. Over time, it has been evaluated and revised. It is offered as a series of six to eight weekly group sessions. The program is built around five colourful, easy-to-read books that are given to the parents free of charge. www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/family_famille/nobody-eng.php

Godmothering Program

The Centre francophone de Toronto services a high percentage of French-speaking newcomers who are mainly from Africa and Haiti. The Centre provides peer support to new mothers through their Godmothering Program. Experienced mothers are recruited and trained and are then paired with new mothers. The volunteer mothers receive four training sessions before starting a six-month relationship with the new mother. Additional information is available in French at www.centrefranco.org/fr/services/familles/familles/.

Preparing New Parents

Focus on Fathers, an organization in York Region offers programs to expectant and new couples, to help them adjust to their new parenting roles. To better meet the needs of the community, the five-week program is offered in eight different languages. A workbook titled “What a Difference a Parent Makes!” has been developed to accompany the participants. Networking with community leaders from different cultural groups has helped ensure participation from the parents. (www.ccsyr.org/ParentingGroups.html)

CONCLUSION

Providing culturally competent support to newcomer families is a difficult but rewarding task for service providers. This field is evolving as newcomers from diverse countries immigrate to Canada.

By considering individual needs, service providers can personalize the support they offer and provide equal opportunities to newcomer children. Newcomers all have different migratory paths and different experiences. As a service provider, you can build on their strengths and enrich the value of the program for all your participants.

Achieving cultural competence takes time and there is always more to learn and experience. Continue to strive for it in your practice by listening to parents, taking advantage of training opportunities, reading recent research and discussing the emerging issues with your colleagues.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ORGANIZATIONS & WEBSITES

Best Start Resource Centre

The Best Start Resource Centre supports service providers across the province of Ontario working on health promotion initiatives to enhance the health of expectant and new parents, newborns and young children. In addition to information, consultations and training, the centre offers a large number of downloadable resources for service providers and the general public.

www.beststart.org

Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada)

FRP Canada promotes the well-being of families by providing national leadership, consultation and resources to those who care for children and support families. The website offers many resources and links for community organizations and newcomer families on a variety of topic related to parenting.

www.frp.ca

Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

A consortium of researchers and academics who identify, synthesize, conduct and disseminate research on early childhood social and emotional development. The site offers summaries of research on a variety of subjects, including Culture, Language Development & Literacy, Second Language and Parenting Skills.

www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

This federal department manages immigration to Canada and helps newcomers adapt to Canadian society and become Canadian citizens. The website contains information on the legislation and administrative procedures related to Canadian immigration.

1-888-242 2100 • www.cic.gc.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada Cultural Profiles Project

This site from Citizenship and Immigration Canada provides information about a range of countries, their cultures, language and lifestyles.

www.cp-pc.ca

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)

A non-profit organization that acts as a collective voice for immigrant-serving agencies and coordinates response to shared needs and concerns. The website offers a directory of member organizations for a wide variety of ethnic and cultural groups.

The Council manages a number of online resources:

- **Settlement.Org:** for newcomers to Ontario (www.settlement.org)
- **Etablissement.Org:** for French-speaking newcomers to Ontario (www.etablissement.org)
- **You Are Here:** for young newcomers to Ontario (www.newyouth.ca)
- **Vous Êtes Ici:** for young French-speaking newcomers to Ontario (www.nouveauxjeunes.ca)
- **Settlement At Work:** for service providers to help them assist newcomers (atwork.settlement.org)

For a complete list of OCASI projects and works, please visit www.ocasi.org • 416-322-4950.

Ontario Early Years Centres

The Government of Ontario supports a comprehensive network of drop-in centres for families with children ages zero to six.

ontario.ca/earlyyears

Ontario Human Rights Commission

An independent statutory body that administers the Ontario Human Rights Code, protects people in Ontario against discrimination in employment, accommodation, goods, services and facilities, and membership in vocational associations and trade unions.

1-800-387-9080 • www.ohrc.on.ca

Ontario Immigration

An Ontario Government website designed for potential and new immigrants to Ontario. It provides information on procedures to follow and lists relevant links.

www.ontarioimmigration.ca

COMMERCIAL SUPPLIERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

The following list of distributors is made available for the readers' convenience and should not be construed as an endorsement by the Best Start Resource Centre. Please note that the list is not comprehensive.

- **A Different Booklist.** This Toronto-based bookstore carries a variety of books for all ages, including young children, which touch upon cultural traditions or issues. Some are dual language.
www.adifferentbooklist.com
- **Language Line Services.** Offers phone interpretation in 170 languages.
www.languageline.com
- **Language Lizard.** A U.S.-based book retailer with dual-language products and multicultural children's books, CDs and posters in over 40 languages.
www.languagelizard.com
- **Putumayo World Music.** Offers a good variety of international children Music. U.S. based, with an office in Canada.
www.putumayo.com
- **Sonsuh.** This educational supplies stores carries a variety of multicultural items such as books, craft supplies, puzzles, play foods, etc. It is based in Toronto.
www.sonsuh.com
- **The Hanen Centre.** Offers books and videos for parents and caregivers to help them support their child's language development. Some of their books are available in languages other than English. U.S. based.
www.hanen.org



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APPENDIX 1 – SAMPLE PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY



At Mothercraft, we strive to ensure that, regardless of where children begin in life, they are on a path to reach their full potential.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Mothercraft, we believe that – regardless of where children begin in life, they are on a path to reach their full potential – and this philosophy is reflected in everything we do.

OUR WORK IS GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING CORE VALUES:

The First Three Years

At Mothercraft, we believe that infancy and early childhood are critical periods for every child to learn to trust and to develop a strong sense of themselves. Since 1931, our programs and services, and our training of early development specialists, have been grounded in this core principle – that how we care for infants will have a lasting impact on the kind of adults they will become. Mothercraft’s pioneering work in caring for infants and young children continues to this day.

Diversity and Inclusion

Mothercraft is an organization that appreciates diversity and practices inclusion and acceptance of all children and their families. Our staff, students and families come from all countries of the world; they speak many languages, practice many faiths, live alternative lifestyles and experience many stresses in their lives. Mothercraft’s programs and environments reflect the appreciation of this diversity of experience, by delivering services that are responsive to the need of students, children and families alike.

Leadership

Our dedicated staff and Board Members ensure that we have the resources necessary to provide leadership and vision to the early years community. It is through the strength and focus of the entire organization, and our unique range of interconnected services, that we provide an unmatched Mothercraft experience for students in early child development, and for families in our childcare programs and intervention services. We know through our collaborative programs and when agencies work together they can build greater community strength and that the sharing of newly created resources and knowledge enhances us all.

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APPENDIX 2 – SAMPLE INTAKE FORM



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR INFANT

Please Print All Information

Mothercraft's goal is to provide childcare programs and early learning environments that welcome all children and their families. By completing this form, you will provide us with key information that will help us to support your child's individual needs as well as the needs of your family.

Child's name: _____

Age upon entering program: _____ Date of Enrollment _____

Your child's day at the Centre will be approximately:

Arrival time: _____ Departure time: _____

PRENATAL HISTORY

1. Please share any relevant information regarding your child's prenatal, labour and delivery history that may help to support their growth and development. (no complications, premature, low birth weight, trauma, c-section etc).

2. Tell us about your child's overall health? _____

EMOTIONAL NEEDS

3. Please describe your child's usual temperament: _____

4. How does your child react to new experiences, new people or changes in routine?

5. Is your child used to being with:

Other adults? Yes / No / Occasionally _____

Other children? Yes / No / Occasionally _____

6. Has your child spent time away from you or been involved in any other type of children's program (i.e. childcare, in-formal childcare, Ontario Early Years, etc)? Please specify.

Length of time _____

7. What is it like to leave your child in someone else's care?

8. How does he/she react without you?

9. How easy or difficult is it to soothe your child when he/she becomes upset? Are there any special methods or words used to comfort your child?

10. What worries, if any, do you have about your child right now?

11. How are you feeling about the transition to childcare? Is there any way that we can support you during the transition process?

PHYSICAL NEEDS

12. Does your child have a special attachment to anything? (pacifier, teddy, blanket, etc.) Please specify when & how they use it for comfort.

13. How does your child go to sleep? What are your child's sleep patterns?

14. What were your child's feeding arrangements prior to entering childcare and what is the current arrangement?

15. What foods has your child been introduced to?

16. Have you experienced any difficulties with your child's feeding? Please specify.

17. Are you aware of any food allergies to date?

FAMILY NEEDS

18. Please note family members, including extended family, who are significant in your child's life:

19. What are the languages spoken at home? _____

20. What are the celebrations, rituals and/or traditions that your family is involved in?

21. Do you have any pets? _____

22. How would you describe your relationship with your child?

Signature _____ Date _____

Relation to Child _____



by/par health **nexus** santé

Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre
180 Dundas Street West, Suite 301, Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8 • 1-800-397-9567 • www.beststart.org

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