

# How to Reach Francophones

Maternal and Early Years Programs

*best start*  
*meilleur départ*

by/par health **nexus** santé

## INTRODUCTION

This guide has been prepared to support Ontario service providers who are working with francophone communities within the maternal and child health fields.

It provides an overview of Franco-Ontarian communities, their needs and health promotion challenges. It highlights numerous suggestions for service delivery as well as descriptions of some successful and innovative programs across Ontario. The programs highlighted are only a sample of the range of programs available and many other effective francophone initiatives exist in Ontario.

It is important to bear in mind that Franco-Ontarians are not a homogeneous group: they represent every social class, a number of ethnic groups and a wide range of educational levels. The fact that they

speak the same language does not make the Franco-Ontarian community a single client group. The purpose of the guide is to improve our understanding of the Franco-Ontarian mosaic and to offer strategies to effectively reach out to the community in ways that can easily be adapted to each community's unique needs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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N.B.: The term “Franco-Ontarian” is used throughout the text to designate all Francophones living in Ontario.

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# Community Profiles

## WHERE ARE FRANCO-ONTARIANS LOCATED?

Approximately 550,000 Francophones live in Ontario, the largest Canadian francophone community outside Quebec. Francophones represent approximately 5% of the total population although the percentage varies widely from one region to another. In Ontario, the francophone population increased by 6,600 between 1996 and 2001. However, since this increase was smaller than the increase in the total population of Ontario, the francophone population actually decreased from 5% to 4.8%.

Region	Regional Distribution of Francophone Population (2001)	Percentage of Francophones in Total Regional Population	Regional Distribution of Total Francophone Population in Ontario (%)
Northeastern Ontario	138,585	25.1%	25.2%
Northwestern Ontario	8,780	3.7%	1.6%
Central Ontario	140,550	1.8%	25.6%
Southwestern Ontario	34,320	2.3%	6.3%
Eastern Ontario	226,705	14.7%	41.3%

Table 1 – Statistical Profile of Ontario Francophones

Sources: 2001 Census – Statistics Canada; Statistical Profiles 2005 – Office of Francophone Affairs

It is important to note that some people whose primary language spoken at home is a language other than French or English, but who use French as their second language, may not have been identified as Francophones in the 2001 Census. This may have been the case with people from African countries, for example.

Between 1996 and 2001, the number of Francophones increased in Eastern and Central Ontario and decreased in the other regions of Ontario, the result of immigration from other countries as well as from other Canadian provinces. Over one-third (37%) of Francophones from Quebec 20 years of age and over settled in the Ottawa region and close to 15% settled in the Toronto area. Over half (55%) of Francophones from other countries moved to Central Ontario and 36% to Eastern Ontario.



## DESIGNATED REGIONS

*Ontario's French Language Services Act*<sup>1</sup> guarantees each individual the right to receive provincial government services in French in 25 designated regions. A list of the designated regions is available on the website of the Office of Francophone Affairs.

The Act applies to any service that is provided to the public by a ministry or an agency of the Government of Ontario. It does not necessarily apply to all public agencies that receive government funding. Although some Francophones live in non-designated regions, they can generally obtain regional and provincial government services in French.

## WHAT DO FRANCO-ONTARIANS NEED?

Health promotion must take into account 12 determinants of health, or factors that can influence health<sup>2</sup>. A number of these determinants, such as culture and social support networks, have a significant effect on Franco-Ontarians. This influence is described below.

Societies that foster belonging improve health. The *Count Me In!* report<sup>3</sup> asserts that the feeling and reality of belonging to a community are created as people come together and establish social networks. This strengthens the feeling and reality of belonging and this is known to make individuals and communities healthier.

According to the *Deuxième rapport sur la santé des francophones de l'Ontario*<sup>4</sup> (Second Report on the Health of Franco-Ontarians), Francophones are more likely to state that they have a poor sense of belonging to their community in comparison to Anglophones.

This report also notes that differences are more pronounced in Northeastern Ontario where more Francophones tend to make lifestyle choices that may compromise their health. Within this region, the rates of smoking and alcohol consumption are higher while the consumption of fruits and vegetables are lower. They also experience less control over their work circumstances. The report indicates that health promotion activities aimed at these lifestyle choices would be most effective in this region.

The report *Setting the Stage: Primary Health Care in French in Southern Ontario*<sup>5</sup> refers to the dearth of French language services for new mothers and young families in the area of health promotion and prevention. It recommends developing and implementing culturally and linguistically adapted health promotion programs that emphasize the determinants of health to improve population health.

These reports highlight specific issues to address within the development and delivery of services: a sense of belonging; smoking and alcohol consumption; and nutrition. They also identify the need for programs that focus on new mothers and young families.





# Challenges of Francophone Outreach

In addition to the challenge of the geographic dispersal of the francophone population, there are a number of other challenges in reaching Francophones in Ontario: the sociocultural context, access to French-language schools, literacy levels, exogamous families, the multicultural context and the working environment of francophone service providers. Following are descriptions of these challenges and suggested strategies to address them, along with some programs examples.



## SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

Although it represents only 5% of the total population of Ontario, the francophone population is highly diversified with respect to the socio-demographic factors of education, income, age, geographic location, origin and language spoken at home. This makes it difficult to generalize, although certain elements hold true:

Franco-Ontarians often belong to two cultures and languages and this is probably their distinguishing characteristic.

- If they come from another country, they keep elements of their native country and adopt some of English Canadian culture.
- If they come from Quebec, they keep elements of Quebec culture and adopt some of English Canadian culture.
- If they are Franco-Ontarian by birth, they have assimilated aspects of both French and English Canadian culture since childhood.

Franco-Ontarian social norms can vary somewhat as well. The report *Si je savais comment... Rejoindre les francophones Faut l'faire!*<sup>6</sup>, notes that:

- Interpersonal relationships are very important to Franco-Ontarians and they need to establish a rapport with people before they can work with them. It is important to establish this relationship, even though it can take time.
- As the product of an oral culture, for some people, French is sometimes considered as primarily a spoken language.
- They prefer simple, practical ideas and solutions to long analyses, theories and speeches.

Convenience also influences the programs in which Franco-Ontarians participate:

- English language programs are sometimes preferred for a variety of reasons. Pregnant Francophones may prefer an English language prenatal program because their doctors are anglophone and they want to know and use the English language terminology. Newcomers to Ontario may choose English-speaking programs in order to improve their English skills.
- Since French language programs are offered less frequently and in fewer geographic regions, some Francophones participate in English language programs because they are delivered closer to home, at more convenient times, or, in the case of programs for families, to accommodate their anglophone partners.

## Suggested strategies:

- Franco-Ontarians have an oral tradition and prefer discussions and the use of humour to more formal presentations.
- Franco-Ontarians will be more influenced by a messenger with whom they can identify and who is passionate about a subject than by a well-known speaker who comes from outside the community.
- Word of mouth is an effective promotional method, especially in rural environments.
- French-language social activities such as intergenerational get-togethers, family celebrations of Saint-Jean-Baptiste day and community picnics can help to strengthen the feeling of belonging for Francophones.
- It is important to encourage Francophones to identify as such and to request French language services. This will reinforce the need for English language organizations to offer such services.
- Emphasize simple, practical solutions that are easily applicable to everyday life: easy recipes that the whole family will enjoy, craft activities using up-to-date materials, physical activities that can be enjoyed close to home, time-saving solutions and so on.
- As with all groups, it is important to build upon current behaviour. For example, if a mother takes her baby out in the stroller every day, encourage her to take a friend and her baby too. If a parent makes his or her own baby food, make suggestions for enhancing the nutritional value of food prepared at home.
- Make sure your message reflects the priorities of the audience of interest. This applies in a variety of sociolinguistic contexts. For example, it may be inappropriate to promote physical activity using images of expensive equipment when part of the population is unemployed or has to work two jobs to manage financially.

### **Petits marmitons –** Centre francophone de Toronto

- This program is offered once a month, on Saturday mornings, to parents accompanied by children 2-6 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 the 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 fathers who work during the week.
- The program has been successful from the start. Its organizers have had to set up two groups to meet the demand and there is always a waiting list.

*(Information provided by Suzanne Giroux)*



## **Bon début – Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara**

- A group for mothers of children 0-6 years old that meets twice a month.
- The program includes a nutritious meal, an educational workshop for mothers and child care service.
- The workshops are presented by local professionals specializing in various topics, such as *home safety*, *parents' role in their child's education*, *introducing babies to solid food*, *stress* (in children and parents) and *the lunch box*.
- The group gives the participants time for learning about and reflecting on their role as mothers. It is also a social event that often results in the formation of new friendships.

*(Information provided by Denise St. George)*

## **An Adapted Resource – Best Start Resource Centre** **La vie avec un nouveau bébé et les troubles post-partum** **Life with a new baby: Dealing with Postpartum Mood Disorders**

- Two educational videos – one in French and one in English – were produced as part of an awareness campaign about postpartum mood disorders. The videos are viewed during prenatal and postnatal programs and are designed to help all members of the family understand the emotional challenges facing mothers after the birth of a baby.
- The videos feature families who experienced difficulty shortly after the birth of their baby and what it was like for them. Both videos have the same messages: normal adjustments, myths about motherhood, postpartum blues, suggestions for family members and so on.
- The English language video features anglophone families and the French version francophone families. While the messages in both are the same, the personal stories are different. The French families portray a more accurate reflection of life for many Francophones in Ontario.

*(Information provided by Louise Choquette)*



## **Gargouille et barbouille –** Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury

- This weekly program is for francophone families with children 0-6 years and is offered in three locations across the region. It is primarily promoted by word of mouth and the program is extremely popular.
- The program encourages the participation of mothers, fathers, caregivers, grandmothers and grandfathers. It offers semi-structured sessions with a games area, crafts and a singing circle. It also has theme days, family outings, parties and guests.
- The staff of the Centre's multidisciplinary team is actively involved in the program, offering workshops, advice and support for families. A nurse offers child care clinics and a dietician provides nutrition information and advice to parents. The program also includes literacy and parenting skills components.
- The program is successful for many reasons: the health component, the opportunity for Francophones to get together, a timetable that fits in with the other community programs and well-equipped facilities in a good location.

*(Information provided by Jeannine Goyette)*





## **An Adapted Program – Connexions bébé**

### **Centre francophone de Toronto**

- The Centre wanted to stay in touch with the mothers of babies aged 0 - 1 years after they had finished the Step by Step program for pregnant women, so a new program was created to reach these parents.
- The leader translated the Make the Connection booklets herself ([www.firstthreeyears.org](http://www.firstthreeyears.org)). She had to adapt some of the games and songs to ensure that the resources would be appropriate for a multicultural population. In the second year of the program, she received a grant to have the booklets revised by a translation agency.
- Promotion is done by word of mouth but also within programs, especially the Step by Step program.

*(Information provided by Kathleen Patterson)*

## **Mini-Clinics – Centre francophone de Toronto**

- This program began in parent/child groups a few years ago and has become popular in French language child care centres in Toronto.
- Once a month, a registered nurse visits the child care or family resource centre before the children leave for the day.
- At each location, the visit occurs on the same day (for instance, the first Monday of every month) but the topic changes: asthma, heart disease, nutrition (with a dietician), dental care, ear health, etc.
- The nurse weighs and measures the child in front of the parents and shows them the findings on a growth curve, which parents find especially interesting. The nurse also discusses the topic for the month or any other topic at the parents' request.
- The educators find these visits helpful as well. They can ask the nurse questions and get referrals to other French language services.

*(Information provided by Suzanne Giroux)*

**"I really appreciate the flexibility and accessibility of the breastfeeding consultant. It's much easier for me to speak in French, especially when it comes to my health."**

*A new mother and client of the Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming.*



## PREPARATION FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Research on the brain confirms that language development is very active before birth until age two and is one critical aspect of early child development<sup>7</sup>. Healthy child development is a known determinant of health, so it is imperative to invest in areas that positively influence a child's health, learning capacity and social behaviour.

For a child to be eligible for admission to a French language school, one parent of that child must meet one of the following requirements:

- the first language learned by the parent and still understood is French;
- the parent has received his or her primary school instruction in French;
- any child of the parent has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in French in Canada.

Even if the parents fulfill one of the above conditions, the child must still be equipped to function in a class that is taught in French. Francophone parents of young children in Ontario therefore need to make sure they develop their children's French language skills, often in addition to English, as this will facilitate their entry into the French language school system. Programs which assist them in doing that can be particularly useful.

It is interesting to note that only two-thirds (65%) of the children who have the right to education in French actually attend a French school in Ontario<sup>8</sup>.

### Suggested strategies:

- It is important that parents value French language learning, think about, and have opportunities to develop their children's French language skills. Prenatal courses are an example of an opportunity to raise parents' awareness and help them to plan their future child's French language learning.
- During activities with young children, encourage the children to use French in the games, especially role-playing.
- A good library of French language books makes it easier for parents to read in French to their children. It is especially difficult for parents to get French language books in rural areas. In addition to books, also consider French language games and videos.
- Read books in French to children on a regular basis during group sessions.
- When delivering French language programs, take the opportunity to promote other French language programs and resources. Encourage the parents to network: getting together outside the program, exchanging phone numbers, etc.
- Family life is the main conduit of language and culture. Emphasize to the parents the importance and integration of French in the family environment: speaking French at the dinner table, reading books in French, watching television in French, etc.



## Resource and Activity Kits

Some agencies have created kits for sale or loan to parents. Parents sometimes have difficulty getting French language books and games, especially in remote regions. Different kits can be assembled for a variety of ages.

- **Ontario Early Years Centre – Simcoe North**

The centre loans theme totes to parents, containing a variety of games and books: felt pictures in theme sets, flash cards on sounds, parts of the body and letters, a reading kit, French language song CDs and books.

*(Information provided by Christine VanderByl)*



- **Invest in Kids – Parenting Box**

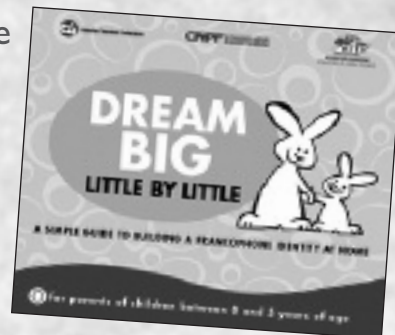
Invest in Kids offers a “Get Set for Life Welcome to Parenting Box” ([www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca)). The box includes a welcome to parenting guide containing information and activities based on the Comfort, Play and Teach approach, a child development toy, a bath mitt, a children’s book, the *Parenting with the Zap Family* video and guidebook and brochures and other information about parenting resources. The box helps parents encourage every stage in their baby’s development and fosters the growth and development of the parent-child relationship.

*(Information provided by Liane Comeau)*

## **Dream Big – Little by Little: A simple guide to building a francophone identity at home**

This is a parent guide for exogamous families. It offers suggestions to help parents adequately prepare their child for entry into a French-language school. The booklet is divided into two parts: an English side and a French side.

- The English side is for the Anglophone parent and offers simple ways to support the French identity of the child.
- The French side is for the francophone parent who may have had a variety of personal experiences and supports towards the French language.
- The manual was a collaborative effort between the Canadian Teachers’ Federation, the Association canadienne d’éducation de langue française and the Commission nationale des parents Francophones.
- The booklet can be ordered for a nominal cost through the Canadian Teacher’s Federation at [www.ctf-fce.ca](http://www.ctf-fce.ca).





## Math en famille –

### Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara

- This six-week program is for francophone parents and their children aged 3-6 years old. It helps them share their thoughts and understanding of mathematical concepts in a warm and welcoming environment.
- Parents and children participate in activities related to different areas of mathematics (e.g., geometry, estimation, measurement). Abstract ideas become concrete as the children use objects they can manipulate. Families gain ideas they can use in everyday life to apply math.
- The program was promoted by the Coin de la famille (family centre) and Best Start Hub staff in a monthly calendar handed out to families involved in Centre activities, and to children aged 2-6 years old in the city's French language child care centres and schools. A short article entitled, "Math: Your Kids Are Counting on You!" providing information about the program was also included in the school report of the school in which the activities took place.
- A volunteer helped with the program, primarily providing child care for siblings who were not the right age to participate in the program.
- The program is successful for many reasons:
  1. The fact that francophone parents in a minority environment see that children's achievement at school improves when parents are involved in their education.
  2. Parents gained awareness of the importance of exposing their children to mathematical concepts in the early years so they can assimilate the concepts with greater ease and rapidity once they are at school.
  3. The program's level of structure, interaction with the parents and continuity over the weeks.
  4. A family meal before the workshop.
  5. No-charge registration.
  6. The opportunity to bring children younger or older than the 3-6 year old age group.

*(Information provided by Jacqueline Fillion)*

## L'école j'en raffole! –

### Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara

- L'école j'en raffole! is a French language adaptation of the School's Cool! program.
- Four-year-olds enrolled in Junior Kindergarten can develop their language and socialization skills to facilitate their integration in Junior Kindergarten.
- In addition, the course has one or more specific objectives from four areas of learning: reasoning, language, socialization and self-sufficiency.
- The timetable for the 72-hour program is three half-days a week over an eight-week period.
- This learning and school readiness course for Francophone children was delivered for the first time at the Centre's Welland location.

*(Information provided by Carol-Lynn Deblois)*





## LITERACY LEVELS



The literacy level of Franco-Ontarians differs from that of other Ontarians. According to the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey<sup>9, 10</sup>, even with a similar level of education, Francophones outside Quebec have a lower literacy level than Anglophones.

Many Franco-Ontarians have been educated in English and are more comfortable using written English. It is interesting to note that 64% of Francophones in Ontario chose to take the literacy survey test in English, a revealing statistic.

This finding is consistent with a needs assessment conducted by the Best Start Resource Centre in 2005 with Franco-Ontario service providers, which clearly indicated that the Franco-Ontarian general public prefers lower-literacy resources supported by visual indicators (pictograms, photos, graphics).

Many Franco-Ontarians identify themselves as “bilingual individuals” rather than “bilingual Francophones.” For them, bilingualism is the key value of Franco-Ontarian culture. The

concept of “bilingual individuals” may be compared to some ambidextrous individuals who can use either hand to perform certain tasks but choose to use one hand for some tasks and the other for other tasks, depending on the situation.

### **Suggested strategies:**

- Offer resources that take into account the possibility of lower literacy: posters, videos, photos, material written in plain language.
- Offer bilingual materials to parents because they may be more comfortable with material in English.
- It is a good idea to reach out to parents in their own homes, through family visits. They are sometimes embarrassed by their level of French, but they want to help their children get access to French language school services.



## EXOGENOUS FAMILIES

Parents play a central role in the preservation of mother tongues. The number of families in which one parent is Francophone and the other is not (exogenous unions) is increasing in Ontario.

French is the language most often spoken in the home for 57% of Francophones. When the mother tongue of both parents is French, most children keep their mother tongue (92%). When only the mother reports that French is her mother tongue, 34% of children keep their mother tongue. When only the father reports that French is his mother tongue, 15% keep their mother tongue<sup>11</sup>.

It is important to implement mechanisms to encourage the inclusion and involvement of anglophone partners in exogenous unions at both the preschool and school levels.

### Suggested strategies:

- Prenatal education sessions can provide a good opportunity for educating parents about the terms of eligibility for French language schools. This should be done in English language classes as well as French language ones in order to reach exogenous couples. It is also important to give parents suggestions for increasing the use of French at home.
- Encourage efforts made by partners whose first language is not French to participate in the sessions orally and in writing.
- Give parents bilingual materials to include both partners.
- When addressing a group in French that includes anglophone participants, speak slowly, write the key words on a blackboard and explain their meaning.
- Make it clear to anglophone parents their attitude toward French is more important than their ability to speak French. Their opinion is crucial to instill a child's positive values towards French.
- Encourage the Francophone parent not only to speak French with his or her child but also to read in French, at an early age.

### Partnerships with Anglophone Agencies – Centre francophone de Toronto

- The Early Years Services of the Promo-santé module (Health Promotion) of the Centre francophone de Toronto, offers, among other services, a clinic for children with developmental delays. They have little difficulty in reaching the clientele because numerous agencies, both anglophone and francophone, refer children to the service.
- To ensure effective client outreach, the staff members serve on both francophone and anglophone committees. In this way, there are many referrals from anglophone agencies for francophone children who might not have received service in their primary language.
- The Centre also notes that it is important to have bilingual promotional materials so that anglophone service providers can learn about the services that are delivered and refer people to Promo-santé as well.

*(Information provided by Agnès Dupin)*

## **Partnership with an Anglophone Agency – Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury**

The prenatal classes given by the Public Health Unit are usually delivered in English but in order to reach francophone clients, a partnership between the Public Health Unit and the Centre de santé communautaire has been set up to deliver the program in French.

- A francophone nurse from the Public Health Unit is invited to take part in two sessions to discuss breastfeeding and baby care.
- A nurse from the Centre de santé communautaire provides information on a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy, labour and delivery, the father's role and numerous other topics in three sessions with expectant parents.
- A dietician from the Centre de santé communautaire gives a session on prenatal nutrition and feeding babies.

*(Information provided by Jeannine Goyette)*

## **Intergenerational Activity – Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/ Niagara**

On St.Valentine's Day and at Easter, Halloween and Christmas, an activity and a community luncheon are held in a community centre, near the Family Centre (Early Years Centre).

- At these events, seniors are matched with families with children aged 0-6 years old for crafts activities, stories and songs.
- The activities are followed by a community luncheon.
- These events encourage the sharing of experiences and help to reduce isolation, especially when extended families live far away. The intergenerational parties are memorable events that everyone enjoys. Seniors are generally eager to transmit their francophone culture to children and this gives them a good opportunity to do so.

*(Information provided by Denise St. George)*



## MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

The origins of Francophones in Ontario are changing gradually. Of the 40,480 Francophones who moved to Ontario between 1996 and 2001, three out of five came from Quebec and one out of five came from another country<sup>11</sup>. The number of Francophones who belong to a racial minority in Ontario is 58,520, an increase of more than 40% between 1996 and 2001.

Francophone racial minorities represent 10% of the province's francophone population. They represent one out of three Francophones in the Toronto area (33%) and one out of seven in the Ottawa and Hamilton areas (14% and 16%).

Francophones who belong to a racial minority are considerably younger than the francophone general population: the percentage of youth in the under-20 age group is twice as high (39% compared to 20%). Issues related to childhood development are therefore even more important for this population.

### Suggested strategies:

- Integrate all the activities for parents who are newcomers to Canada within other programs. They may not see a parenting skills development program as a priority if they are grappling with financial or legal challenges. It may be more effective to incorporate the following topics into one program for young parents: job search, access to medical services, access to legal services, access to the school system, access to child care services, planning a budget, developing a social support network, etc.
- Ensure that they are aware of French language schools and the eligibility criteria. Depending on the parents' country of origin, French may be their second language and English their third.
- During discussions, invite the participants to talk about their experiences in Canada and in their home country and encourage them to explain how these experiences are related to their traditions and customs.
- Use activities that can help the participants set up and expand their social networks, for example, by forming friendships with other participants.
- Offer activities designed to help with children's school integration: familiarity with themes such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Although public schools do not incorporate religious education, Christian celebrations are often integrated into school culture and it may be helpful for parents and children to be familiar with them and to know about the North American adaptations of these holidays (Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and so on). Give participants an opportunity to discuss the cultural variations of their home country.
- Provide activities in which parents can discuss their ideas about their traditional values and parenting styles in a new cultural context. How will they respond when their child behaves in ways that contradict their values? It may be helpful to invite parents who have already experienced this transition to contribute to the discussion and help to come up with solutions.
- As with all parents, provide activities that are based on problem solving and prevention: setting reasonable parenting expectations, establishing family rules, setting up a family routine, strategies for improving communication with their child, the principles of "natural consequences", opportunities for enhancing children's self-esteem, discussing the difference between discipline and punishment and so on.



## **C'est toi le chef! –**

### **Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara**

- This was a summer activity of the Growing Together program that combined healthy eating and the development of an intergenerational social network.
- The activity consisted of three sessions:
  - A planning and muffin-baking session.
  - A cookie-baking session.
  - A “coffee shop” morning in which francophone seniors took part.  
The children were the waiters. They took the seniors’ orders and served them muffins, cookies, coffee and juice.
- The event was a big success for everyone involved and the seniors really enjoyed it.
- There was no charge for the catering but many participants gave donations. The children decided to use the money to buy French language books and games for the local hospital.

*(Information provided by Carol-Lynn DeBlois)*



## WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Service providers working with Francophones in Ontario tend to share the following characteristics:

- They often work in smaller agencies with lower budgets and fewer staff members.
- Their mandates often require them to duplicate the services delivered to the English language population.
- Their role is often that of a “generalist”; i.e., they represent a range of programs and topics for their agency, unlike their anglophone colleagues, who are often more specialized.
- Their teams are smaller, which makes it more difficult to find replacements so they can attend training sessions.
- They generally serve a population that is more geographically dispersed.
- They are often geographically isolated from one another.

### Suggested strategies:

- Networking opportunities are key. Francophone service providers enjoy getting together to share their experiences.
- Given the constraints of human resources, finances and geographic isolation, travel for workshops and meetings must be planned well in advance and must offer clear benefits. Whenever possible, offer extensive agendas that can address the service providers’ many needs (a variety of topics, opportunities for networking and for exchanging resources, etc.).
- If necessary, consider using methods that do not require travel such as teleconferencing or audiovisual conferencing, or seek out opportunities for subsidizing travel costs.
- Francophone service providers have often been educated in English and are not always comfortable with materials containing French language technical terminology. In such cases, consider providing definitions or material in both languages. This will also make it easier to share knowledge and materials with colleagues and to use appropriate terminology in both languages.
- In regions that have not been designated bilingual, it is important for bilingual service providers to identify themselves as such to their employers (especially in large organizations), so their employers know they are prepared to deliver services to Francophones. This information must be communicated within the organization, especially if there is a great deal of organizational change.

## **Early Screening for Children Aged 18 Months to 6 Years – Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury**

- These are early screening sessions in which francophone parents can meet with health professionals to get information about various aspects of the development of their preschool child.
- This program offers screening for hearing, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, language development, social skills and learning.
- The sessions also provide referrals to francophone and other services within the community that are tailored to the child's needs.

*Information provided by Jeannine Goyette*



**"I really liked that we were a small group.  
It was cosier, less awkward! We had a lot of fun!"**

*- Expectant mother, prenatal classes at the Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming*

# General Recommendations

## RESOURCES

- Reflect the cultural context appropriately. Do not just translate a document: adapt it.
- Remember that the literacy level of the francophone population is generally lower.
- Resources from Quebec or France are not necessarily appropriate. Study them carefully before using them.
- Francophones sometimes feel that English language resources are better: create French language resources that are of similar quality to those in English.
- Be aware that there are Francophones in every area of the province, even if they do not identify as such and the region has not been designated bilingual. This means that service providers should always provide French language materials whenever it is available.
- Let participants know at all times that material is available in French.

## PROGRAMS

- Find ways of overcoming geographic, financial and socio-economic obstacles such as carpooling for participants, lower costs for programs, subsidies from service clubs (Club Richelieu, Optimists' Club, etc.).
- Form alliances with other community agencies to further promote programs and events and make the most of available resources.
- Adapt programs to the specific needs of clients. The same approach or format does not necessarily work with the entire francophone population. A program that works in English will not necessarily work in French, and a program that works in rural Northern Ontario will not necessarily work in Hamilton. For example, it may be necessary to offer a drop-in prenatal program that is less structured than prenatal classes but still provides the information parents need.
- Involve a francophone representative from your audience of interest in designing and planning programs. This person can help with the development, promotion and implementation of the program.
- School is an excellent environment on which to base the growth of French language services: child care centres, early years centres, toy libraries, etc. School can provide a lasting link between early childhood and school age. It can also provide an opportunity to share resources such as a library and toys.
- Before offering a French language program per se, it may be necessary to promote the idea and the importance of a French language program, especially to exogamous families.
- Since the foundation for much behaviour is laid in the early years, use that opportunity to instil healthy behaviours and solid links to community resources available in French.
- Be ready to deliver programs for smaller groups; e.g., groups of five individuals or five couples.



## PROMOTION

- Francophone outreach can take more time and energy and can require a long-term relationship with the target groups.
- Francophones in a minority environment have a strong oral culture, so word of mouth and personal contact are preferred mediums.
- The French language schools are good points of contact for the francophone community. For topics related to preconception and prenatal health, the French language colleges and universities can also help to reach Francophones.
- Advertising in French language community newspapers and on community radio stations works well, but there are only a handful of French language local newspapers and community radio stations in Ontario. For a list of French language newspapers and radio stations, visit the website of the Office of Francophone Affairs.
- Since some Francophones prefer to get written information in English, it may be helpful to promote French language programs in both French and English, depending on the local media.
- Francophones also sometimes get information through their social and community networks: professional associations, youth groups, education networks, religious organizations, health care and social services, sports and leisure associations, financial institutions, libraries, service clubs, etc. This can offer other ways of promoting a program or event; e.g., through these groups' newsletters, bulletin boards, meetings and displays.
- During advertising campaigns, verify the effectiveness of the promotional message and any visual elements used with francophone clients, especially when a similar English language campaign is used. A discussion group may be helpful in adapting the message for francophone clients.



## Opportunities

The current political climate in Canada and Ontario is conducive to linguistic duality and Franco-Ontarians are generally encouraged to use their mother tongue. In addition, francophone immigration in Ontario is creating a greater need for French language services because many French-speaking immigrants are not proficient in English, which is not necessarily the case for native Franco-Ontarians.

Some organizations offer French language programs designed for the early years and for health promotion. Here are some of these programs:

*Attachment Across Cultures* ([www.attachmentacrosscultures.org](http://www.attachmentacrosscultures.org)). Offers a series of fact sheets on attachment and perinatal care in a number of languages, including French. Prepared by the Multicultural Perinatal Network of Toronto Public Health.

*Canadian Heritage* ([www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch](http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch)). Canadian Heritage is responsible for national policies and programs that promote Canadian content, foster cultural and community participation, active citizenship and participation in Canada's civic life and strengthen connections among Canadians. The department sometimes provides financial support.

*Cliquezsanté.ca*. Provides an on-line directory of francophone health care and social services professionals in Ontario. The primary goal of Cliquezsanté.ca is to enable Ontario's francophone and francophile population to have access to French language health care services. The directory is an initiative of the Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario ([www.rifssso.ca](http://www.rifssso.ca)).

*Commission nationale des parents francophones* ([cnpf.ca](http://cnpf.ca)). A national francophone umbrella organization of provincial and territorial organizations of parents who are working or interested in French language education in a minority environment. The CNPF website is filled with research documents and practical references for service providers, including ideas for toys and nursery rhymes for preschoolers.

*Gouvernement du Québec – L'avenir en français program*. The Québec Policy on the Canadian Francophonie offers opportunities for cooperation. The Gouvernement du Québec is interested in expanding the scope of its policy to early childhood, through two programs: the Programme d'appui à la francophonie canadienne and the Programme de coopération interprovinciale. These programs were developed to create partnerships and set up networks between Francophones in Quebec and those in Canada's other provinces and territories. For additional information, visit the website of Quebec's Secrétariat aux affaires intergouvernementales canadiennes ([www.saic.gouv.qc.ca/francophonie](http://www.saic.gouv.qc.ca/francophonie)).

*Office of Francophone Affairs* ([www.ofa.gov.on.ca](http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca)). The Office is committed to ensuring that Francophones have access to provincial government services in French and that they contribute to the social, economic and political life of the province, while maintaining their language and culture. The website provides information about Ontario's francophone communities, announcements about events and information about the services and resources available.

*Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario (RIFSSSO)* ([www.rifssso.ca](http://www.rifssso.ca)). RIFSSSO is an organization of francophone health care and social service professionals, both individuals and groups. Its aim is to promote communication among its members and to assist them in improving the delivery of French language services in Ontario.

*Société santé en français* ([www.forumsante.ca](http://www.forumsante.ca)). Société santé en français (SSF) was created in 2002 with the aim of promoting the development of French language health care for Canada's francophone minority communities. SSF has 17 regional networks, four of which are in Ontario:

- Réseau francophone de santé du Nord de l'Ontario
- Réseau santé en français du Moyen-Nord de l'Ontario
- Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario
- Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario

These networks can offer good opportunities for health promotion. Activities and programs that tend to receive SSF support are in areas such as networking, service structuring and the development and appropriate use of advanced technologies.

# References

- <sup>1</sup> *Ontario's French Language Services Act (1986)*. ([www.ofa.gov.on.ca/english/FLSA.html](http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca/english/FLSA.html))
- <sup>2</sup> *Public Health Agency of Canada*. ([www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/ddsp/determinants/index.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/ddsp/determinants/index.html))
- <sup>3</sup> *Count-me-in!* ([www.count-me-in.ca](http://www.count-me-in.ca))
- <sup>4</sup> *Deuxième Rapport sur la santé des francophones de l'Ontario*, Public Health Research, Education and Development Program, Institut franco-ontarien, Laurentian University, Louise Picard and Gratien Allaire, 2005 ([www.sdhu.com/uploads/content/listings/rapport\\_sante\\_jan06.pdf](http://www.sdhu.com/uploads/content/listings/rapport_sante_jan06.pdf)).
- <sup>5</sup> *Setting the Stage: Primary Health Care in French in Southern Ontario*. Part of a series of regional reports and a provincial report. Available from the Société santé en français, 2006 ([www.forumsante.ca](http://www.forumsante.ca)).
- <sup>6</sup> *Si je savais comment... Rejoindre les francophones Faut l'faire!* Service de la santé d'Ottawa-Carleton, 1995.
- <sup>7</sup> *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development*. Jack P. Shonkoff & Deborah A. Phillips. National Academy Press, 2000.
- <sup>8</sup> *Our Schools, Our Future. Association des enseignantes et enseignants franco-ontariens*, 2006 ([www.aefo.on.ca/Rapports/aefo\\_policy\\_paper\\_2006\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.aefo.on.ca/Rapports/aefo_policy_paper_2006_en_web.pdf)).
- <sup>9</sup> *Study: Literacy and the Official Language Minorities*. Statistics Canada, 2006 ([www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/061219/d061219b.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/061219/d061219b.htm)).
- <sup>10</sup> *Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey*, Statistics Canada, 2003 ([www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)).
- <sup>11</sup> *Highlights from the General Profile of Francophones in Ontario*, Office of Francophone Affairs, ([www.ofa.gov.on.ca/docs/stats-highl-francophones.pdf](http://www.ofa.gov.on.ca/docs/stats-highl-francophones.pdf)).

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES CONSULTED

*La petite enfance: porte d'entrée à l'école de langue française. Pratiques communautaires en petite enfance. Le cas de Timmins (Ontario)*. Nathalie Riendeau. Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Citizenship and Minorities (CIRCEM), University of Ottawa, 2002 ([www.circem.uottawa.ca/pdf/06-monographie\\_de\\_Timmins.pdf](http://www.circem.uottawa.ca/pdf/06-monographie_de_Timmins.pdf)).

*La revanche des cerveaux – Perspectives à long terme pour le développement d'une société francophone en milieu minoritaire* (cnpf.ca).

*Parenting in a Culturally Diverse Society: A Manual for Professionals. Ad Hoc Committee on Parenting in a Culturally Diverse Society. Parent Resource Centre (Ottawa)*, 1995 ([www.parentresource.on.ca](http://www.parentresource.on.ca)).

*Profiles of Official-Language Minority Communities (OLMCs) in Ontario*. Official Languages Support Branch, Canadian Heritage, 2004.

*Reversing the Real Brain Drain: Early Years Study*, Norrie McCain and Fraser Mustard, 1999 ([www.children.gov.on.ca/CS/fr/programs/BestStart/Publications/EarlyYearsStudy.htm](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/CS/fr/programs/BestStart/Publications/EarlyYearsStudy.htm)).

*Tell Me A Story (Then Tell It Again): Supporting Literacy for Preschool Children from Bilingual Families*. Child and Family Canada ([www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/00001014.htm](http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/00001014.htm)).

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