



REPORT TO: Co-Chairs and Members of
Public Health and Social Services Committee

SUBJECT: Children's Services Quality Improvement Report

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommends to Regional Council that this report be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Children's Services directly operated child care programs continually seek ways to improve service quality to children and families.
- Updates provided in this report on quality improvements and related activities include: staff education, training and development, enhanced service provision, community support and program evaluation and compliance.
- Updates reflect a balance between improved quality within considerable fiscal restraint by creating innovation solutions to meeting and exceeding child and family needs with no cost/low cost solutions.
- Provincial licensing compliance with new reporting standards aimed at educating parents on individual centre performance during annual licensing.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

PURPOSE

To provide Committee and Council with an overview of innovative approaches to quality and service improvement in support of a broad range of children and family needs.

BACKGROUND

Children's Services provide comprehensive early learning programs within five licensed child care centres in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Welland and St. Catharines and a licensed home child care program. In 2008, Children's Services' five directly operated child care centres supported a total of 381 children and 315 families while Home Child Care provided support for a total of 676 children and 475 families, a combined total of 1,057 children and 790 families. The majority of families (95%) enrolled were eligible for fee subsidy.

Direct Operations continues to service a higher percentage of children with special needs and those with behavior issues as compared to the broader system of service operators. For many parents Regional Child Care may not be the first centre their child has been at since many of these children have been removed from other child care centres. This is due to staff being unable to handle these children's high needs or behavioural problems. Of the 243 children currently receiving care as of June 2009 in the 5 Regional Centres, 56% are being monitored for or have an identified behaviour, speech, English as a Second Language (ESL) or special need. Direct operations staff manage these complex needs without additional support funding, unlike Niagara's other child care centres, offering a system saving equivalent to \$195,000 annually. This is achieved through expert leveraging of staff expertise and best practices.

REPORT

Children's Services continues to seek opportunities to strengthen child care services and accountability in the community. As families and children needs continue to become more complex and no new funding is available, some highlights of innovative no cost/low cost solutions undertaken by Children's Services to maintain and increase quality are as follows:

Staff Education, Training and Development

College of Early Childhood Educators: A commitment to ensuring that all staff in direct operations in the role of Early Childhood Educator are registered with the new College of Early Childhood Educators. Supporting high standards in Early Childhood Education by ensuring that children are cared for by qualified professionals comes at a cost to the corporation. Annual fees for staff that are members in the College represents a cost increase that Children's Services has managed by finding off-setting cost savings in training without compromising quality including:

- *Training:* Train the trainer model has been used as a means to leverage limited staff training investment to the broader staff and into the community. A relatively low cost investment of training 2 or more identified staff to attend courses in order

to become certified trainers enable Children's Services to extend a training investment to more staff.

A couple of examples include: Triple P Parenting, (2 resource teachers trained) and Resiliency Training in which 3 Supervisors are trained.

All ECE staff, including home child care program support workers, are trained in Quality Child Care Niagara Phase 1 and 2, the HANEN program "Learning Language and Loving it" and the newly implemented Standard of Practice which serves as a self-evaluation and planning tool for supervisors and staff. Ongoing specialized staff training has served as a self-evaluation and planning tool for supervisors and staff.

- *Mentoring:* A new provincial program, Mentoring Pairs for Child Care, was launched in 10 pilot communities in 2008, one of which was Niagara. The program is facilitated through the Early Childhood Community Development Centre in St. Catharines with funding from the Province of Ontario. In 2008, 2 supervisors from regional child care centres were chosen to mentor ECE's in other Niagara child cares. At the same time, 2 staff chose to be mentored by mentors from external child cares. This is contributing to raising the level of knowledge, expertise and professionalism of Niagara Regions' direct operations.

Enhanced Service Provision

Licensed Home Child Care Provider Recruitment: High quality licensed home child care offers Children's Services the ability to strategically expand child care spaces including infant space at minimal cost within the current staffing complement and according to changing demand demographics. Expansion of home child care is a tactic undertaken by Children's Services to maintain child care spaces in the face of reduced funding and negative impacts of full day implementation. Some initiatives include:

- *Partnership with SAEO:* In order to expand the services across the Region, Children's Services piloted a specialized training program for Ontario Works participants interested in becoming a caregiver contracted by the Niagara Region's Home Child Care Program.
- *Marketing:* Provider recruitment flyers given to school administrative staff in areas where child care demand exists have been targeted by Program Support Workers. Targeted marketing initiatives have been done at virtually no cost with results. A new comprehensive legal contract developed in collaboration with Corporate Legal Services better defines Children's Services service quality expectations. The network of service providers has expanded to 100 homes, up from 75 from last year with the same staff complement.

Parent Engagement: Children's Services is constantly seeking opportunities to improve services and to provide support to families which include the following:

- *Surveys:* Newly designed and implemented parent survey provides input to the development and implementation of the program.
- *Resources:* Free materials and resources to families through an accessible resource library, such as language enhanced materials designed by staff in consultation with Speech Services Niagara.
- *Communications:* Development of a new provider newsletter for home child care providers, and newsletters in each centre provide parents with relevant information, monthly calendars and parent nights. Parent handbooks for both programs were professionally designed in-house resulting in a savings of nearly \$5,000.
- *Parent Information Night:* Customized education and networking opportunities for caregivers and parents offered through the child care centres often include guest speakers to meet the needs of families, at no charge.

Community Involvement

Niagara Region Children's Services has taken the lead within the early childhood service community by extending services and our expertise to other child care agencies including:

- *A Community Kitchen:* Where parents and families from Bethlehem Place and St. Catharines Regional Child Care Centre learn how to prepare healthy, affordable meals and meet other parents. Donations of food from local suppliers and staff involvement support the monthly events at a low to no-cost.
- *Promoting Health Eating:* St. Catharines Child Care Centre provides daily nutritious snacks to the after school programs at Manchester and Stokes Housing Projects to support children living in poverty. Utilizing dietary staff from all five child care sites to prepare snacks has made it possible to provide low cost nutritious snacks.
- *Daily Physical Activity:* Staff and children at the Welland Child Care Centre worked closely with student volunteers from E.L. Crossley Secondary School to create a staff training video that ensures that all new staff, parents and students in placement are familiar with the DPA (Daily Physical Activity) incorporated into children's daily routine.
- *Inclusion:* Early Childhood Educators at the Fort Erie Child Care Centre offer support in conjunction with Immigration services at the Peace Bridge for families entering into Canada. Staff provides educational opportunities and care to a diverse group of children during these sometimes challenging transitional experiences.

Program Evaluation and Compliance

Earlier this year, the Province made a commitment to transparency requiring that child care programs are required to post the results of annual licensing inspections for parents to view. A report reflecting compliance as a percentage of requirements met in nine key areas is provided by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services following inspection. Only one centre, Welland Regional Child Care Centre, has been inspected and re-licensed to date and achieved 100% compliance (see Appendix 1 for details).

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Brian Hutchings
Commissioner, Community Services

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared by Rosemary Martin, Manager Children's Services and reviewed by Kathryn O'Hagan-Todd, Director.

Appendix 1 – Licensing Inspection Summary



Ministry of Children
 and Youth Services

Ministère des Services
 à l'enfance et à la jeunesse

LICENSING INSPECTION SUMMARY

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) inspects licensed child care centres at least once a year. This is to help protect the health, safety and well-being of children in this child care centre.

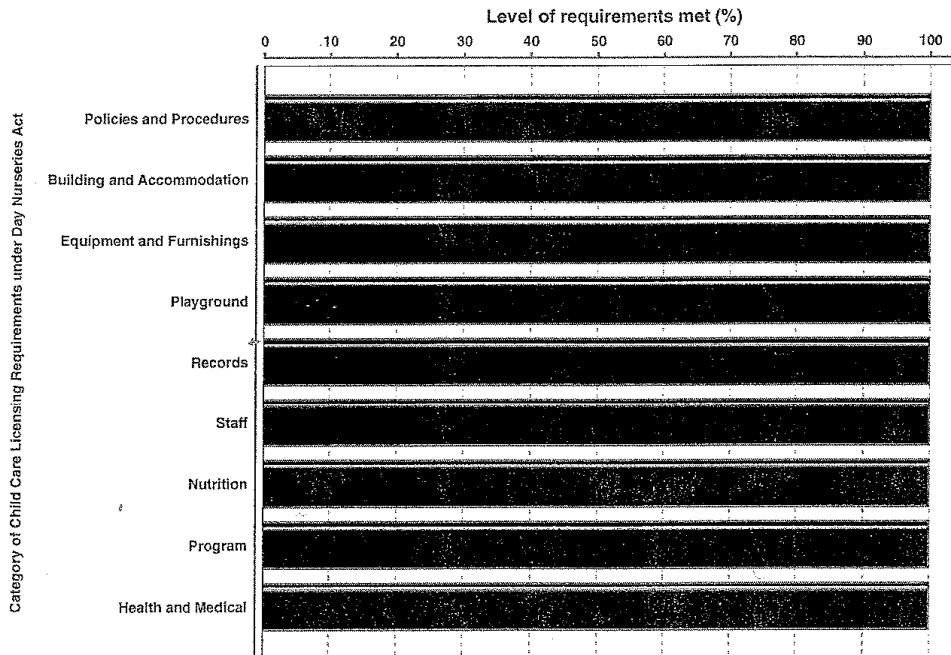
Welland Regional Child Care Centre was inspected by the ministry on *June 3, 2009*.

The chart below shows the licensing requirements met on the date of inspection. If the level is less than 100 per cent, it means that not all of the licensing requirements were met on the date of inspection.

The ministry gave the operator of the program instructions on what was required to meet the licensing requirements. Please speak to the operator of this child care centre to see a copy of the requirements. The operator can provide an explanation of the inspection findings and when the requirements were met.

More information about child care and licensing is available on the ministry website at www.ontario.ca/licensedchildcare.

Your local MCYS regional office is located at *119 King Street West, 7th floor Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y7*.



The DNA provides that it is an offence to knowingly furnish false information in any application, statement, report or return required under the Act or regulation; if convicted of this offence, a person may be liable to a fine of \$2000 for each day on which the offence continues or to imprisonment of not more than one year, or to both a fine and imprisonment.