



PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Of The

TORONTO BEST START NETWORK

Between

CITY OF TORONTO, CHILDREN'S SERVICES
As Consolidated Municipal Services Manager

And

District School Boards:
TORONTO DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
TORONTO CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE DE DISTRICT DU CENTRE-SUD-OUEST
CONSEIL SCOLAIRE DE DISTRICT CATHOLIQUE CENTRE-SUD

And

TORONTO PUBLIC HEALTH

And

Provincial Ministries:
MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES (Toronto Region)
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (Toronto Region)

Background:

Best Start is a multi-year Province of Ontario strategy bringing together different ministries, levels of government, communities and service providers to “address the factors that put young children at risk, and to create communities that support healthy child development and learning” (*Provincial Implementation Guidelines*). The Toronto Best Start Network is a partnership of 36 members representing two provincial ministries, four school boards, the City of Toronto, Toronto Public Health, representatives from the Francophone and Aboriginal communities, various networks, coalitions, organizations, and the United Way, all of whom are committed to achieving the Best Start vision in Toronto.

The Network has set forth terms of reference (*Toronto Best Start Network Terms of Reference*) and an overarching framework for planning and implementation at a systems level entitled, “**Best Start Plan – Toronto Vision for Children.**” The *Best Start Plan* envisions a major redesign of services and supports for young children that will see in its first phase increased coordination and integration of kindergarten, child care and family support programs around community/neighbourhood hubs.

Building upon the Toronto First Duty demonstration project, the *Best Start Plan* provides a framework for local planning of community/neighbourhood hubs organized where possible, around schools, with a focus on the following core elements:

- ◆ Developing a **high quality learning and care environment** through innovation, best practices and collaborative approaches to curriculum, activities and routines
- ◆ Bringing together staff expertise at the local level to create an **early years staff team** including early childhood educators, teachers, educational assistants and family support staff who work collaboratively to achieve common goals
- ◆ Identifying obstacles and solutions and working towards **inclusive access** of children and their families in programs and services
- ◆ Developing a **continuum of supports and services** that makes the most efficient use of resources in responding to the changing needs of families and children
- ◆ Encouraging and enabling the **participation of parents** in programs and services, planning, service delivery and governance
- ◆ Developing a **local governance structure** to support community/neighbourhood planning, service integration and local decision making
- ◆ Developing a community/neighbourhood **partnership agreement** reflecting the vision and goals of the *Best Start Plan*

Purpose:

This Partnership Agreement outlines shared accountabilities and commitments, of the signatory parties in working together and within the Best Start Network to implement the *Best Start Plan – Toronto Vision for Children*. It sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners at the service systems level in creating the conditions for successful implementation of the plan. It is anticipated that local partnership agreements will eventually be drawn up for individual community/neighbourhood hubs.

For purposes of this Partnership Agreement, the core service providers and their associated ministries named above will be referred to as signatory partners. Insofar as the larger partnership of the Network has shared accountability for integrating services and supports to

achieve the Best Start vision, other organizations/partners are eventually expected to sign on to an amended version of the Partnership Agreement.

Statement of Commitment:

The partners acknowledge and accept the shared values, guiding principles and framework set out in the *Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children*. They agree to work together on a multi-year basis towards innovation, enhancement and integration of programs, services and supports for young children and their families in the City of Toronto. They acknowledge their interdependence in achieving the goals of the *Best Start Plan* and are committed to working in partnership including identifying areas where early partnership success is most likely and identifying and lessening barriers to working together.

The partners also recognize and accept each other's areas of exclusive jurisdiction. They acknowledge that some goals in specific areas may be best accomplished by working independently of each other.

In addition, the partners agree to specific roles and responsibilities held in common or uniquely as set out below.

Common Roles and Responsibilities of the Partners:

All of the partners agree to:

- ◆ Champion the *Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children* and work collaboratively towards its implementation
- ◆ Identify opportunities for developing linkages between kindergarten, child care and family support programs
- ◆ Support joint planning of schools, child care, family support and other community organizations
- ◆ Champion the development of community/neighbourhood hubs involving kindergarten, child care and family support programs*
- ◆ Provide dedicated leadership and staff time for partnership and networking activities
- ◆ Support sharing of program and curriculum information
- ◆ Sponsor joint professional development of teachers, child care and family support staff
- ◆ Work together to develop enabling mechanisms to allow sharing of information about children and joint planning to meet their needs
- ◆ Work together to identify service gaps and to develop appropriate strategies for addressing the gaps
- ◆ Work collaboratively to develop an evaluation framework that will employ a range of strategies to evaluate Best Start service outcomes
- ◆ Work collaboratively to develop annual implementation plans

* The term "hub" denotes a service delivery system with a central point of activity or focus that relates to all of the other activities. In the Best Start vision, the central point of activity or focus is provided by the coordination or integration of kindergarten, child care and family support programs that may or may not be situated at the same location.

- ◆ Plan and advocate for sufficient financial resources to meet one's responsibilities as outlined in this memorandum

Unique Roles and Responsibilities of the Partners:

As service system manager for the municipally-funded child care system, the **City of Toronto Children's Services** agrees to:

- ◆ Disseminate information about the *Best Start Plan* widely within the child care service system
- ◆ Identify issues and work to secure broad support for the plan from within this system
- ◆ If necessary, amend contractual arrangements with municipally-funded child care organizations to require participation in the plan
- ◆ Provide leadership and identify ways to link other municipally funded services such as special needs resources, recreation and public libraries with the community/neighbourhood hubs
- ◆ Disseminate best practices regarding enhanced early learning programs
- ◆ Disseminate best practices about working in partnership
- ◆ Ensure that the implementation of the *Best Start Plan* is consistent with *The Best Start Service and Transition Infrastructure Plan and updated Child Care Service Plan*

The **District School Boards** agree to:

- ◆ Disseminate information about the *Best Start Plan* widely within their organizations
- ◆ Identify issues and work towards building broad support for the plan from all levels of their organizations
- ◆ Champion the development of community/neighbourhood hubs for all JK and SK programs including encouraging linkages between schools and child care or family support programs that may be off-site
- ◆ In accordance with the Schools First Policy (*Best Start Provincial Implementation Guidelines*), provide sites/space for community/neighbourhood hubs wherever possible
- ◆ Develop an Early Years policy to provide directions and a framework for developing, coordinating and delivering early years programs
- ◆ Identify an Early Years staff team to coordinate and review early years initiatives and support the implementation of the *Best Start Plan*

The **Toronto Region of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS)**, agrees to:

- ◆ Disseminate information about the *Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children* widely among MCYS-funded organizations serving young children and their families in Toronto
- ◆ Provide leadership and support for linkages between MCYS-funded organizations including the Ontario Early Years Centres and the community/neighbourhood hubs
- ◆ Interpret Ministry policy regarding the Best Start strategy (*Provincial Implementation Guidelines*) for the partners
- ◆ Approve plans and monitor implementation of the *Best Start Plan*
- ◆ Engage in coordinated implementation of early years policy and liaise with other children's ministries at the regional level to ensure consistency
- ◆ Commit to the use of the Best Start Network planning table as the vehicle for overarching early years planning activities

- ◆ Within the application of child care licensing standards, provide innovation and flexibility to enable implementation of the Best Start strategy
- ◆ Identify and track issues and barriers to implementation of the Toronto *Best Start Plan* and work with the corporate office of the Ministry to try to resolve them
- ◆ Maintain a commitment to funding the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to be administered every three years as a key measure of outcomes of the Best Start strategy, within provincial funding allocations

The **Toronto Region of the Ministry of Education** agrees to:

- ◆ Promote ownership of the Best Start vision within the education sector and provide leadership and support to school boards in implementing the *Best Start Plan*
- ◆ Engage in coordinated implementation of early years policy and liaise with other children's ministries at the regional level to ensure consistency
- ◆ Interpret Ministry policy for the partners especially in regard to early years curriculum development
- ◆ Identify and track issues and barriers to implementation of the Toronto *Best Start Plan* and work with the corporate office of the Ministry of Education and other ministries to try to resolve them
- ◆ Within provincial funding allocations, plan and maintain a commitment of sufficient financial resources to support early years initiatives by school boards

Toronto Public Health agrees to:

- ◆ Disseminate information about the *Best Start Plan* widely among early years providers and organizations operated or funded by Toronto Public Health
- ◆ Identify issues and work towards building broad support for the plan among these providers
- ◆ Identify ways to coordinate public health programs for children with the community/neighbourhood hub system of delivery
- ◆ Identify ways to develop linkages between early identification and intervention programs and the community/neighbourhood hubs
- ◆ Provide information on child and family population health and well-being that can be used in planning and monitoring the community/neighbourhood hub system

Problem Solving Mechanism

By signing, the signatories agree the terms outlined in this Partnership Agreement and commit to holding themselves and each other accountable for fulfilling their respective roles and responsibilities as detailed in this Agreement. The signatories agree to a joint problem solving approach to resolve, in an expeditious manner, any issues that may arise in the course of implementing the *Best Start Plan*.

Time frame, review periods and term of this agreement

This Partnership Agreement has a three year term. By signing, the signatories agree to the terms outlined in this Partnership Agreement and commit to holding themselves and each other accountable for fulfilling their respective roles and responsibilities as detailed in this Agreement. It will be reviewed by the signatories on an annual basis. It is understood that the Agreement may be amended at an earlier date by agreement of the partners to allow additional Network members to sign on as signatory partners.

Signature: B Patterson

Print Name: Brenda Patterson

General Manager
Children's Services, City of Toronto

Signature: Gerry Connelly

Print Name: Gerry Connelly

Director of Education
Toronto District School Board

Signature: Marilyn Penwick

Print Name: Marilyn Penwick

Regional Director, Toronto Region
Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Signature: Kevin Kobus

Print Name: KEVIN KOBUS

Director of Education
Toronto Catholic District School Board

Signature: John DePaolo

Print Name: JOHN DEPAOLO

Regional Director, Toronto Region
Ministry of Education

Signature: Michelle Boucher MICHELLE BOUCHER

Print Name: JEAN-LUL BERNARD

Director of Education
Conseil Scolaire de District du Centre-Sud Ouest

Signature: Dr. David McKeown Juanita Hogg-Scime

Print Name: Dr. DAVID McKeown

Medical Officer of Health
Toronto Public Health

Signature: Bernard Lavallee

Print Name: BERNARD LAVALLEE

Director of Education
Conseil Scolaire de District Catholique Centre-Sud

This Partnership Agreement is effective October 23, 2006.



Addendum

Dated February 15, 2007

To The

Partnership Agreement

Of The

Toronto Best Start Network

To Include

All Members

Of The

Toronto Best Start Network

Addendum

Purpose: this Addendum outlines shared accountabilities and commitments of the Network partners in working together to implement the Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children. It sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners in creating the conditions for successful implementation of the plan.

Common Roles and Responsibilities of the Toronto Best Start Network Members

Best Start Network Members agree to:

- ◆ Champion the Best Start Plan: Toronto Vision for Children, and work collaboratively towards implementation
- ◆ Disseminate information about the Toronto Best Start Plan widely within their own sectors/organizations
- ◆ Communicate with service providers, parents and community within their sector about implementing Toronto's Vision for Children
- ◆ Identify opportunities for developing linkages between their own sector and schools, child care and family support programs
- ◆ Identify issues in their sectors that create barriers to collaboration, and work within the Best Start Network structure to address issues and barriers
- ◆ Provide dedicated leadership and staff time for partnership and networking activities to move their sectors forward in implementing Toronto's Vision for Children
- ◆ Work collaboratively to develop strategies/implementation plans for their sector to move forward on working together
- ◆ Work towards ensuring that their sector/organization has policies and strategies in place to ensure their capacity to take the next steps to implement Toronto Best Start Plan, Toronto Vision for children.

Time frame, review periods and term of this agreement

This Addendum (dated February 15, 2007) to the Partnership Agreement of the Toronto Best Start Network is in effect until October 23, 2009. By signing, the Network partners agree to the terms outlined in this Partnership Agreement and commit to holding themselves and each other accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as detailed in this Agreement. It will be reviewed by the Best Start Network on an annual basis.

Signature: Anne Bailey

Print Name: ANNE BAILEY

Title: DIRECTOR, BRANCH LIBRARIES

Toronto Public Library Board

Signature: Sue Bartleman ^{as per} Brenda Librecz

Print Name: Brenda Librecz

Title: General Manager Parks, Forestry
Recreation

Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Signature: Anne McGregor

Print Name: Anne McGregor

Title: Manager - Recreation Programs

Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Signature: Gerald McNeely

Print Name: Gerald McNeely

Title: Manager - CCAS of Toronto

Children's Aid Societies of Toronto

Signature: Betty Kashima

Print Name: Betty Kashima

Title: Executive Director - Aisling
Discouries Child & Family Centre
Children's Mental Health

Signature: Jean-Gilles Peccetier

Print Name: JEAN-GILLES PECCETIER

Title: ED - CENTRE FRANCOPHONE DE TORONTO

French Language Services

Signature: Patricia Hunt

Print Name: Patricia Hunt

Title: Chair - Metro Assoc. of Family
Resource Programmes

Toronto Family Resource Programs

Signature: Pat Miller

Print Name: PAT MILLER

Title: CO-CHAIR

Ontario Early Years Centres, Toronto Network

Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: JIM TSATSOS
Title: CHAIR
Child Care Advisory Committee

Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: JEAN-GILLES PELLETIER
Title: ED. CENTRE FRANCOPHONE - CAC DE TORONTO REP.
Toronto Community Health Centres

Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: JANE MERCER
Title: EXECUTIVE CO-ORDINATOR
Toronto Coalition for Better Childcare

Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: Sharon Filger
Title: Executive Director, member agency
Home Child Care Association

Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: Joanne Wilson
Title: Project Coordinator
**Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs/
Community Action Program for Children
(CPNP/CAPC)**

Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: Graham Baldwin
Title: _____
Special Needs Advisory

Signature: [Signature]
Print Name: Bernadette Gallagher
Title: Director of Support Services
Aboriginal