

CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

The Province of Ontario is currently developing its plan of action for young children's care and education. In 2007, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Dr. Charles Pascal as his special advisor on early learning. In 2009, Dr. Pascal released his report, *"With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario"*, a comprehensive early learning plan that recommends a model of integrated service provision called a Child and Family Centre. This model of service provision is intended to improve the outcomes for children (prenatal to 3.8 years) and their families. Dr. Pascal's report also outlined the roles and responsibilities of school boards and municipalities, with municipalities being named the manager of the system of services for Child and Family Centres.

Within this context, the City of Toronto has developed a Child and Family Outcomes Framework that defines common aims for all children and their families. It will also help Child and Family Centres reflect the unique needs and strengths of communities by ensuring the right mix of services.

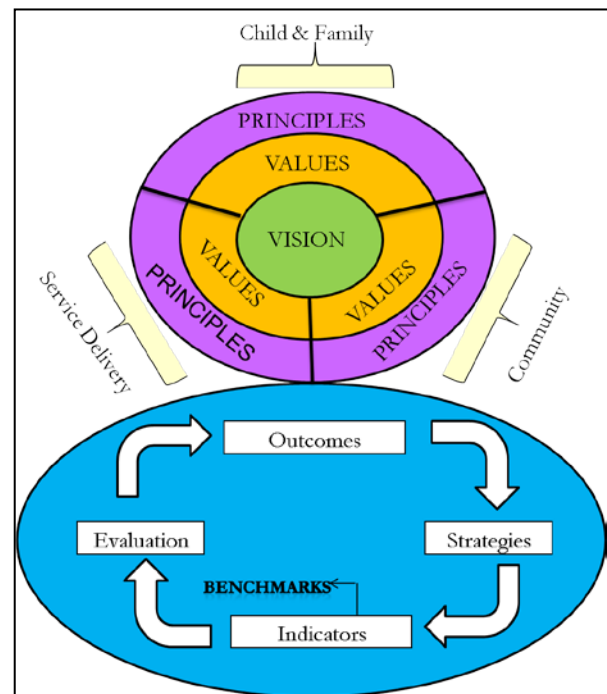
SUMMARY OF FRAMEWORK

Vision

Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family and community, every child has the right to childhood experiences, which promote the chances of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adult.

Values & Principles

- Access and Equity
- Accountability
- Integration
- Quality
- Community/Family Engagement
- Innovation
- Diversity
- Social Determinants of health
- Safe Environments
- Common Outcomes



Child & Family Outcomes

- Healthy Development
- Economic Security
- Safety
- Lifelong learning
- Positive Parenting & Healthy Families
- Supported Parents

Service Outcomes

- Equity & Accessibility
- Accountability
- Integration
- Quality
- Community & Family Engagement

Community Outcomes

- Healthy Communities
- Social Inclusion
- Cultural Development

Background:

Historically, evaluation of public services has focused on process-related outputs, such as how many people received a service or how many things were produced. Recently, there has been a shift in evaluation styles from measuring outputs to measuring impact also known as 'outcomes'. This shift is related to funders' increased interest in tracking their return on investments. In Toronto, the provincial and municipal governments have shown support for this movement in key documents such as: Provincial Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR) (2008) and in the Toronto Report Card on Children (1999 to present). The PMFSDR highlighted the importance of creating measurable results for all human services by stating that municipalities should create services that can show progress against outcomes. The Toronto Report Card on Children has promoted outcomes through its collection, monitoring and reporting of outcomes for children and families.

What are Outcomes?

Outcomes can be defined as: a measurable change or benefit for someone or something. An example of a child and family outcome might be an increase in knowledge of early child development or an improvement in physical health. Changes to communities and agencies can also be measured, such as, improved communication between service providers or improved integration of services. When naming and building outcomes it is helpful to use change words, and to examine what has changed before and after a program or activity has been put in place. This moves away from the use of outputs towards focusing on what is achieved.

How and why are Outcomes used?

There are many advantages to using outcomes. Naming and measuring outcomes can help to focus teamwork around a shared vision and common goals, while improving commitment and accountability. Measureable outcomes also energize teams by demonstrating the real impact that they are making on clients. Outcomes can provide the evidence for sound decision-making by providing a way to measure the impact of programs and services offered. This type of evidence is critical to community planning and to ensure that services and programs are achieving what is intended.

Why use Outcomes for Child & Family Centres?

The Province of Ontario is in the process of re-organizing the system of services for children and families. In 2007, the Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty appointed Dr. Charles Pascal to be his special advisor on early learning. In 2009, Dr. Pascal released his report, "*With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*", which recommends a comprehensive early learning plan. This plan includes moving child care from the Ministry of Child and Youth Services to the Ministry of Education, rolling out full day kindergarten and the development of a model of integrated service provision called Child and Family Centres. This re-organization takes the perspective of the client or customer. It is meant to reduce administrative burdens on families, to eliminate services that are duplicated, and to create a system that is responsive to children, their families and their communities' needs.

Clearly defined and measurable outcomes are required to guide this process. Outcomes help focus efforts and resources by defining a shared purpose and inspiring achievement of common aims for all children and their families. They also provide direction to the delivery of services by making it possible to track progress through evaluation with measurable targets.

What are Child & Family Centres (CFCs)?

As outlined in the Pascal Report on Early Learning, Child and Family Centres are physical and/or virtual hubs that offer one-stop services and supports for children and families. CFCs will provide inclusive, high quality services, in a way that will appear seamless to children and families. The services provided will be planned at a community-level and will take into account the community's strengths and needs. CFCs will be a model of planning and service delivery (See Figure 1).

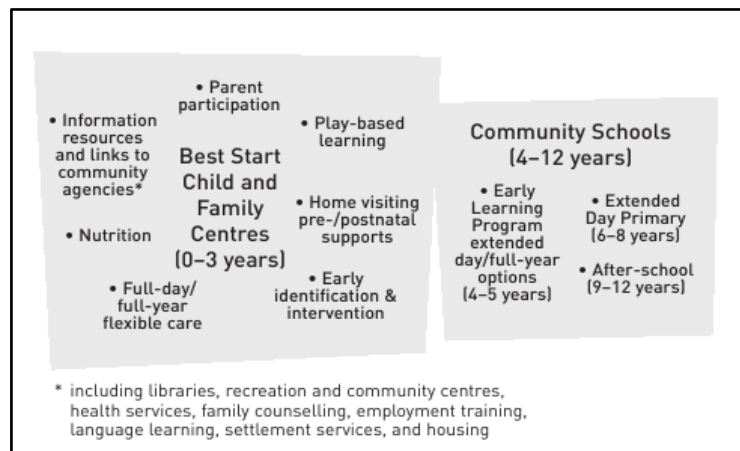


Figure 1: Child & Family Centres Model

Developing a Child and Family Framework:

The City of Toronto has developed a Child and Family Outcomes Framework that focuses more broadly on children (prenatal to 12 years) and their families. It defines common aims for children and their families and will serve to provide broad direction to the development of Child and Family Centres and other integrated services in Toronto.

The child and family framework builds on Toronto's vision for children:

"Regardless of the socio-economic status of his/her family and community, every child has the right to childhood experiences, which promote the chances of developing into a healthy, well-adjusted and productive adult."

This vision, widely adopted and Council- approved drives the framework. The framework itself details the City's values and principles, outlines outcomes for children and their families, and clarifies strategies that are required to achieve objectives.

To develop the value and principle statements contained within the framework, an internal process engaging all city divisions that have influence on issues relating to children (prenatal to 12 years) and their families was employed.

The framework also outlines common outcomes for children and families, communities and service delivery. The common outcomes build on the long history of outcome development at the City of Toronto. They continue to place the child and their family at the centre.

To determine which particular outcomes should be included in this Framework, existing City of Toronto documents were reviewed, as was the best available research from international sources on child and family health and well-being, child development, early learning and care. Frameworks that have been successfully utilized elsewhere were also considered.

Themes identified in the review were used to engage City divisions and the community in the development of shared outcomes that are clear, relevant, and measurable, and which are likely to be influenced by intervention.

Outcome themes fall into three categories: Child and Family Outcomes, Community Outcomes and Service Outcomes. Child and Family Outcome themes identified are: Economic Security, Healthy Development, Positive Parenting & Healthy Families, Safety, Life-long Learning, and Supported Families. Community Outcomes themes identified are: Cultural Development, Healthy Communities, and Social Inclusion. Service Delivery Outcomes themes identified are: Accountability, Community & Family Engagement, Equity & Accessibility, Integration, and Quality. Together these outcome categories provide a holistic view of the way in which they interact to influence the wellbeing of children.

Using the Outcomes Framework to Plan for Child and Family Centres (CFCs):

The Child and Family Centre is a mechanism through which a broader Outcomes Framework can be implemented and measured. The universal outcomes that have been previously outlined have many influencing factors and they can be achieved in many ways. Some influencing factors to achieve these outcomes are beyond our direct control, such as unemployment rate. Other factors are related to the types of services provided and the way in which they are provided. Using universal outcomes as the long-term guide, CFCs will be one strategy that will use integrated service delivery to make a positive impact at the community level.

The framework provides vision and direction to CFCs as a strategy to achieve universal outcomes. To evaluate the success of CFCs more immediately it will be necessary to develop progress outcomes that are the incremental benefits to children and families that increase the likelihood of achieving the universal outcomes and are tailored specifically to CFCs and the communities they serve.