

Hamilton
Best Start

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Toronto
Best Start Community Forum
March 29th, 2011

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- ✓ Families
- ✓ Neighbours
- ✓ Communities

People

Make Hamilton
the Best Place to
Raise a Child

HAMILTON'S VISION

- **Best Start is about Children**
 - Providing the supports to bring out the best in young children.
- **Best Start is about Families**
 - Supporting parents and families, and collaborating with them to enable them to provide children with the best possible opportunities early in their lives.
- **Best Start is about Community and Connections**
 - Strengthening partnerships and enhancing the integration of all community supports for children and their families.
- **Best Start is about Our Future**
 - Best Start is about doing what is best for our children and our future.

Successes and Highlights: STRUCTURE IN ACTION

- Decision to be one system
 - Programs under one umbrella
- Decision making for locations
 - collective process involving multiple stakeholders
- Funding sources
 - multiple funders contributing to one system
- One system/one voice
 - communication is coordinated

Successes and Highlights: IMPROVING ACCESS AND SERVICES

- Increased investments across entire City – not just in “demo” area
- Increased early learning and child care spaces by 1143
- Created 7 new Ontario Early Years Centres including Aboriginal and Francophone specific programs
- Enhanced services at all existing Ontario Early Years Centres
- Decreased waiting time for speech and language services by 81%
- Funded cultural sensitivity assessments for Best Start partner agencies

Successes and Highlights: SERVICE INTEGRATION

- Provided 98 “Check it Out Clinics” to over 450 children resulting in follow up referrals for 200 children
- over 350 primary care providers engaged in the promotion of connecting families to community resources
- Development of Service Provider Networks to ensure integration at the neighbourhood level
- Increased collaboration of School Boards, early learning centres and child care programs

Challenges and Mitigations: LESSONS LEARNED

Constantly changing landscape – funding and focus
recommitment to the initiative

Relationships – system strength and weakness
building sustainability into system

Fuzzy governance
determining the role of the municipality

Evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives
defining the benefits of integration

Funding pressures on partners
no new money for OEYC's

Resources matter
require people and \$ to keep large collaborative
initiative moving forward

Challenges and Mitigations: LESSONS LEARNED

- Leveraging other opportunities
 - Private funding, United Way, poverty reduction strategies
- Alignment of new initiatives with overall plan
- Parent feedback on the benefits of smaller outreach vs. full service centres
- Ensuring the early years system includes all aspects – child care, education, early learning centres, speech and language

WHAT'S NEXT

- Focus on “tough” conversations and looking at ways to effectively guide our community through a change management process
- Hold true to our role as the “go to” planning table and review what structure is necessary to fulfill that role through the transition period

Thank You

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