

Northeast Regional Intersectoral Committee
Early Years Report to Senior Inter-ministry Steering (SIMS) Committee
March 2013

Highlights and Areas of Focused Attention

- ❖ **On November 1, 2012 the baseline Early Years Data was presented** to the Northeast RIC and the Early Years Coalition – 0-3 Years Early Childhood Task Force. The data indicate that 30.2 % of the children in the northeast are vulnerable scoring low in one or more domains of the Early Development Instrument – considered not ready to take advantage of the opportunities of formal school learning. In the northeast there were 6.2 % of the children that were considered to have multiple challenges. These kindergarten children may have benefited from early identification and early intervention.
- ❖ Our **Early Years Strategic Planning session** was held on October 4, 2012. Our aim is to increase school readiness by 10 % by 2018 as measured by the EDI. The facilitated session was attended by 21 individuals representing the RIC, the 0-3 Years Early Childhood Task Force, parents, Métis and First Nations communities. The group outlined four broad strategies to influence early childhood outcomes: 1.) measure and monitor progress towards our aim, 2.) cultivate expectations for the best possible care, 3.) parent and community engagement, and 4.) support parents to be the best. The RIC and the 0-3 Years Early Childhood Task Force are presently implementing a plan which focuses on parent and community engagement and supporting parents to be the best.
- ❖ **Early Years Data presentations** have been delivered by the Kids First Community Developer to Primary Health Care Provider teams, Kelsey Trail Health Region Obstetrics Team and Kids First Nipawin. The presentations have increased awareness of the importance for the early years. KTHR obstetrics committee has reviewed the early years data and is looking at all regional issues and best practices for optimal birth/ maternal/ newborn outcomes.
- ❖ **The Population Health Leadership Team** includes intersectoral partners from Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation, Kelsey Trail Health Region, North East School Division, NE RIC, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, ER II Metis Nation, NE Day Care Directors Association, Prince Albert Grand Council, Heart and Stroke Foundation and others. The Eat Well, Play Well subcommittee is building capacity for child care centres to address healthy weights/ childhood obesity through board approved physical activity policies and implementation of physical activity programming.
- ❖ **Early Years and Family Services Guide Services** has been updated and distributed in 2012.
- ❖ **The North East School Division** continues to focus efforts on improving student outcomes through enhanced early learning supports in pre kindergarten and kindergarten and increased focus on literacy development for grades 1-3. NESD has developed 32 new pre kindergarten spaces in Nipawin and Melfort. The school division will implement the Early Development Instrument by March 31, 2013.
- ❖ **Early Learning and Child Care** – Since January 2012 approximately 65 new licensed spaces have been developed with new centres opening in Nipawin, Tisdale and Kinistino.

- ❖ **Since 2011 Books for Babies and 18 month book bags** are distributed to parents of young children throughout the region. Along with an age appropriate picture book aimed to encourage early literacy the book bags include useful information for parents to support healthy child development.
- ❖ **Maternal Mental Health** – An implementation committee has developed a Maternal Mental Health Screening and Referral Package distributed to health professionals throughout the region. Professional development, screening for depression and an early intervention strategy has been implemented.
- ❖ **KidsFirst Targeted Nipawin** celebrated their 10 year anniversary in June 2012. The program continues to successfully support families in vulnerable circumstances.
- ❖ **Data collection and dissemination** - The Northeast RIC would like to acknowledge the North East School Division, for their leadership in completing the Early Development Instrument and Kelsey Trail Health Region nurses for facilitating the completion of the In Hospital Birth Questionnaire. Thank you to the Ministry of Education Early Years Branch for their work in preparing and presenting the Early Years Data packages which include the Community Risk Indicator data and EDI and IHBQ information.

Challenges and opportunities in our region

- ❖ Although there is increasing interest and dedication to the improving outcomes for young children, coordination of efforts, accessing parent input, moving to most promising practices and encouraging participation by all agencies and community stakeholders is challenging given limitations on human and other resources.

Provincial Challenges

- ❖ Research indicates that adverse childhood and prenatal experiences affect the healthy development of children and influence trajectories of lifelong health. We need to address issues of domestic violence, poverty, lower education of adults, lower literacy rates, inadequate housing and food insecurity as these issues increase vulnerability of families.
- ❖ Robust population measures of early childhood development are crucial to evaluating community impact as we aim to improve outcomes for our youngest citizens. In order to effectively monitor our progress it is necessary that Saskatchewan have consistent implementation of the Early Development Instrument by kindergarten teachers, data collection through the in hospital birth questionnaire and the provincial resources to support the collection, collation and dissemination of provincial, regional and community level data.
- ❖ A provincial integrated early years strategy is paramount with adequate, reliable resourcing for: consistent messages about the importance of the early years, building parent and community capacity, and cross ministry investments in policy, strategy and monitoring with specific targets to improve outcomes for our children and our future.

Respectfully submitted by:

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