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COMMUNITY AND FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends:

- 1. Receipt of the presentation by Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Acting General Manager, Social Services and Bernice Landry, Supervisor, Social Services; and**
- 2. Adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated February 16, 2012, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.**

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council receive this report for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report highlights how innovative Family Strengthening Programs administered by the Community and Health Services Department link to the overall social service and child care system and help encourage economic and social integration of low income families. Programs in this initiative are:

- All Our Kids Early Child Development and Parenting Programs (AOK)
- Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)
- Ontario Works/Social Housing Summer Day Camp
- Youth Leadership Camp
- After School Programs in Social Housing Sites

3. BACKGROUND

Family Strengthening Programs are a range of programs and services for low income families in York Region that enhance social and economic integration

These programs are delivered at no cost to low income families. They are designed to support and strengthen families and child development and promote social inclusion.

Family Strengthening Programs are responsive to the needs of low income families and are designed to provide families with access to:

- Parenting supports and community resources
- Community based programs and services
- School readiness programs

Many families that participate are those with a low income, recent immigrants, and/or those in need of parenting supports and services. These programs offer families and/or their children access to community based activities by removing barriers such as user fees and transportation costs (as they are located in their neighbourhoods), and by helping agencies establish programs in low income and immigrant communities.

These programs are funded through York Region's Community Development and Investment Fund.

York Region collaborates with community agencies and local municipalities to provide coordinated service delivery

The Community and Health Services Department works in collaboration with children's mental health agencies, municipal recreation departments, resource centres, child care agencies, and Ontario Early Years Centres. Funding is administered and programs are monitored and evaluated through Purchase of Service Agreements.

There are over 15,000 low income parents with children under the age of 18 in York Region. While single parents have the lowest family income, two-parent families make up almost half of all low income families. There are over 34,000 children under 18 in York Region in low income families.

Over 49,000 residents are eligible to receive supports offered by Community Programs to link them to our communities and economy, and to prevent crisis. Using community partnerships and bolstered by Community Development and Investment Fund funding, Community and Health Services is able to serve just over 8,000 of these residents at an average cost of just under \$110 per resident per year or \$9.16 per month.

Family Strengthening Programs provide benefits for children, families and communities

The Community and Health Services Department's Family Strengthening initiative supports research showing that investing in Family Strengthening Programs can be cost effective and reduce dependency on social assistance, health and other social services. It recognizes the importance of the family structure to the economic and social well being of the parent, and to the development of the child.

Parents gain knowledge and coping skills, can work, and/or pursue education to enable them to contribute more effectively to our economy. Their children learn valuable life skills to enhance their integration into society that they may not obtain elsewhere.

Specifically, evidence-based research shows Family Strengthening Programs result in:

- Increased participation in skill development and pre-employment training programs
- Improved social, emotional and educational outcomes for the children
- Stable, healthy lifestyles for families and improved ability to achieve independence
- Opportunities for families to engage in their communities

All Our Kids Early Child Development and Parenting Programs (AOK)

There are 25 AOK drop-in sites for parents and caregivers to come with the children, to join in family strengthening activities and family support workshops. Sites are located in schools, places of worship, libraries and community centres.

Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)

York Region collaborates with nine local municipal recreation departments to provide recreation programming to children and youth of low income families age 4-18 (including those with special needs).

Children and youth of families receiving social assistance, childcare or housing subsidy can attend swimming, soccer, gymnastics etc. along with other children in the community.

Ontario Works/Social Housing Summer Day Camp

Children age six to 13 from families in receipt of social services are funded to attend summer camp; including special needs children.

Youth Leadership Camp

Youth age 11 to 16 receive a one-week overnight camp experience in which they learn life skills, about relationships, trust, problem solving and overcoming personal challenges.

After-School Programs in Social Housing Sites

After-school drop-in programs are provided in seven social housing communities, for children age six to 12. Children receive homework help, life skills development and join in sport and recreation activities.

Additional program initiatives through Multi-Year Plan (MYP)

- Through 2011 approval of \$72,055 under MYP, an additional 415 children were able to attend PLAY and Camp in 2011.
- A new initiative for sole support parents to participate in PLAY resulted in 60 parents attending recreation programs in the fall. Individuals took computer, photography and various programs; feedback was that they made connections, improved self-confidence and learned new skills.
- An after-school recreation program was piloted on Georgina Island for 15 children.

- Sports (basketball) courts were installed in the Newmarket Youth Shelter and Brayfield Social Housing site. The youth spend their free time on the courts instead of the streets and it is a perfect opportunity for counsellors to interact and build trust with the youth in a casual fun way.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Family Strengthening Programs are responsive to the needs of children and their families

Family Strengthening investments support positive social structures and relationships while reducing the barriers created by poverty. Investment in recreation for children results in improved physical and psych-social health, reduces isolation and encourages economic and social integration of low income and new immigrant families.

Link to key Council–approved plans

Family Strengthening community programs contribute to the key economic and healthy community goals outlined in Visions 2026 and 2051, the Region’s 2011 to 2015 Strategic Plan objective to increase the economic vitality of York Region, as well as the Community and Health Services Department’s Multi-Year Plan. These initiatives and programs also contribute to fulfilling goals of the Human Services Planning Board “Investing in children, youth and families is a preventative approach to reducing economic vulnerability” and “Access to health, social and community services/supports”.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Table 1 provides an overview of the Family Strengthening initiatives administered by the Social Services Branch of the Community and Health Services Department in 2011. Over 8,000 residents (children and their families) received services through these initiatives.

Table 1
Program Expenditure and Individuals Served 2011

Family Strengthening Programs	2011 Expenditure	Number of Residents
All Our Kids (AOK)	\$255,285	5,722
Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)	116,562	1,488
Ontario Works and Social Housing Summer Camps	304,694	502
Youth Leadership Camp	23,142	57
After School Programs in Social Housing	182,020	249
Total	\$881,703	8,018

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Working in many cases in collaboration with local municipalities, Family Strengthening Programs provide York Region families and their children with access to welcoming quality programs and supports within their local municipalities. This promotes healthy child development, social inclusion, community involvement and attachment to the workforce.

7. CONCLUSION

The Community and Health Services Department remains committed to work in partnership with the community to continue to expand and enhance Family Strengthening Programs that are high quality, delivered cost effectively and continue to meet measurable objectives. The Community and Health Services Department recognizes the importance of family structure to the economic and social well being of the parent and to the development of the child's full potential.

As part of York Region's Family Strengthening initiatives, departmental branches will continue to work together with the community and local municipalities to provide innovative and responsive programs and services which support better economic outcomes for families. Research indicates that savings to tax payers down the road from family strengthening programs are substantial.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Acting General Manager, Social Services at Extension 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

Supporting Residents to Transition to Independence Through Social Services

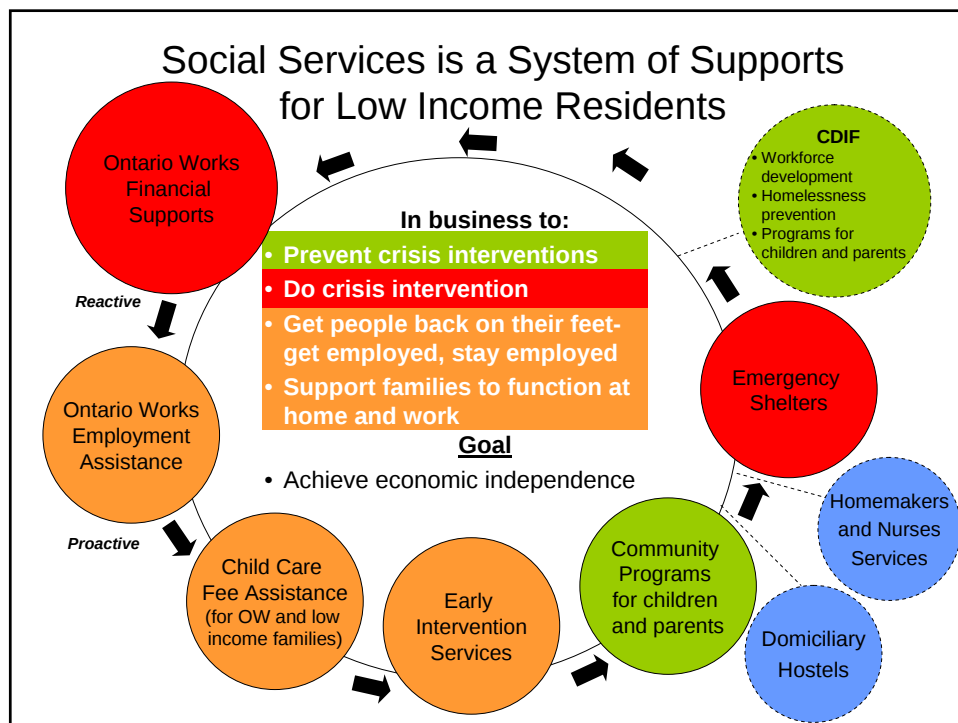
Community and Family Strengthening Programs

Cordelia Abankwa-Harris
Bernice Landry

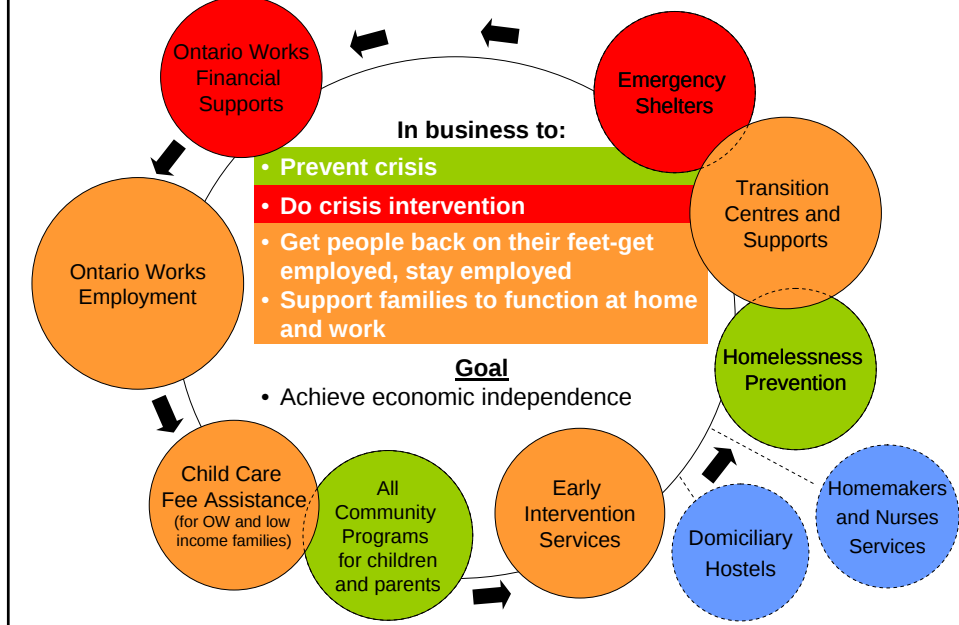
March 7, 2012



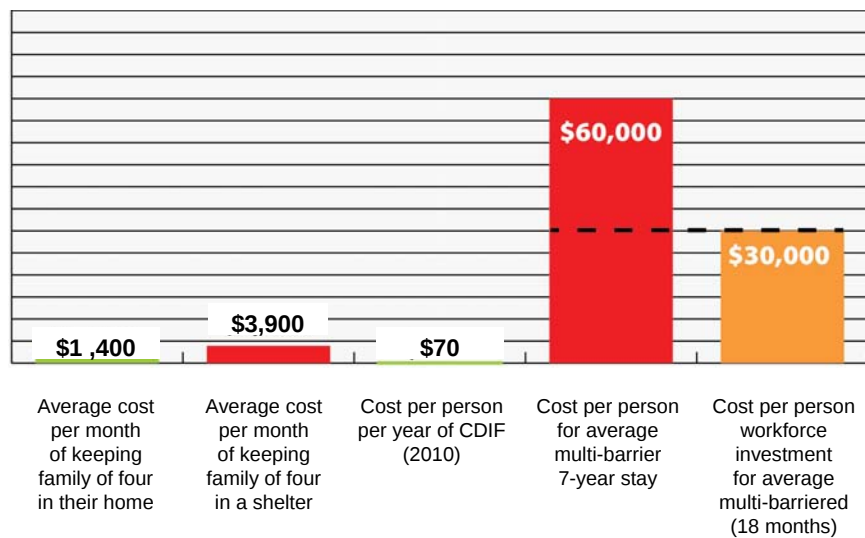
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What Social Services Internal System of Supports Could Look Like



Cost/Benefit of Prevention and Crisis Intervention Avoidance



Thoughts About Childhood

❑ Childhood memories

❑ Barriers

- Costs
- Language
- Mental/physical health
- Transportation
- Isolation
- Obesity
- Neglect
- Violence
- Discrimination



Children Say – Poverty Is?

“Not being able to play soccer or hockey, take swimming lessons or go on school trips or to camp”

“Not having breakfast, or pretending you forgot your lunch”



“Being teased about clothes, being afraid to tell your mom or dad you need gym shoes or not buying books at the book fair”

“Being ashamed when your dad or mom can't get a job or when you get a basket from Santa Fund”

source: Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (2005)

York Region Community & Family Strengthening Programs

Family Strengthening

- ❑ All Our Kids Early Child Development and Parenting Programs (AOK)
- ❑ Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)
- ❑ Ontario Works/Social Housing Summer Day Camp
- ❑ Youth Leadership
- ❑ After School Programs in Social Housing Sites

Community/Family Development

- ❑ Supporting almost 35,000 low income children and/or their caregivers



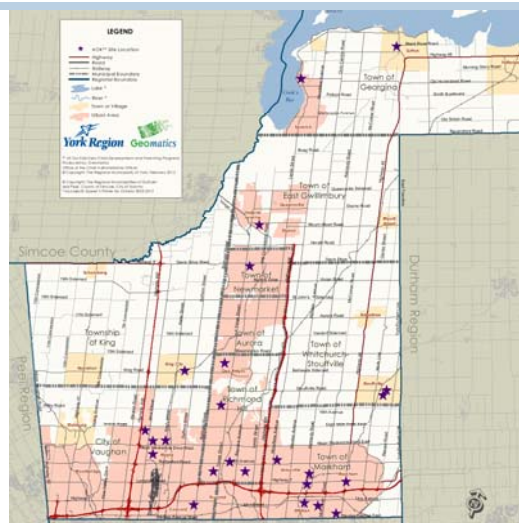
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York Region Early Child Development and Parenting Programs (AOK)

Resources available for every program:

- ❑ Health
- ❑ Social Services
- ❑ Early Intervention Services
- ❑ Ontario Early Years
- ❑ Preschool Speech and Language
- ❑ Recreation
- ❑ Literacy Specialists
- ❑ Library services, workshops and much more



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York Region Recreation Partnerships

Town Of Newmarket The Early Years Youtube.mpg

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrC7ao2sBq0>



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Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY)

- ❑ Free access to recreation programs through collaboration with 9 local Recreation Departments
- ❑ Employment support for parents
- ❑ Children and youth 4-18 years of families receiving social assistance, child care or housing subsidy, and sole support parents on Ontario Works
- ❑ Families can choose from a variety of activities (e.g. sports, swimming, dance, arts and crafts)
- ❑ Promotes healthy lifestyle, improved outcomes, navigation of systems



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Summer Camp

- ❑ Children 6 to 13 years of age of eligible families
- ❑ Variety of camps operated by the 9 local recreation departments
- ❑ Funding available to include those with special needs
- ❑ Each child receives a backpack with camp supplies



Social Housing Programs

After school drop-ins for children and youth 6 to 18 years include:

- ❑ Activities for those 6 – 12 include snack, homework club, arts & crafts, cooking, music, sports and more
- ❑ Activities for youth 13 to 18 promoting: leadership, positive communication, problem solving and organization skills training.

One week youth leadership camp – youth 11 – 16:

- ❑ Learn about relationships, trust, problem solving and positive personal challenge resolution

What They Are Saying...

"Theatre camp helped my son more with understanding social cues than 10 years of therapy."

"I have been able to stay employed year round because of camp."

"Camp staff are awesome"

"We bonded and made new friendships"

"I felt that my family was average and did not feel needy"

"Thank you, Thank you! Finally I didn't have to say no"

"It gives you the energy (seeing your child) to go out into the workforce and help others"

"Being new to Canada, it helped me learn English"



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Results and Return on Investment



- ☐ Parents can connect and stay connected to workforce because kids are cared for
- ☐ Enhanced physical and psycho-social health of families
- ☐ Increased youth attendance and achievement at school.
- ☐ Decreased number of behavioural/emotional problems among children
- ☐ Less incidence of depression and therapeutic services
- ☐ Decreased use of crisis services and increased proactive use of health promotional services (emergency medical services, child welfare, police)

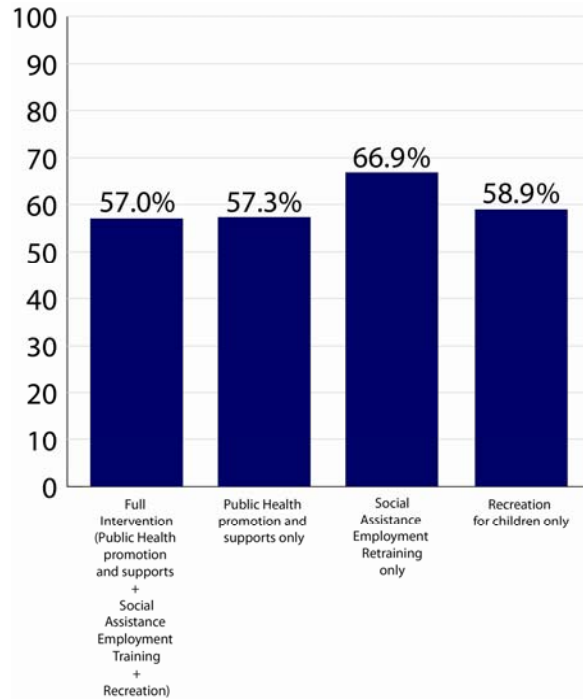


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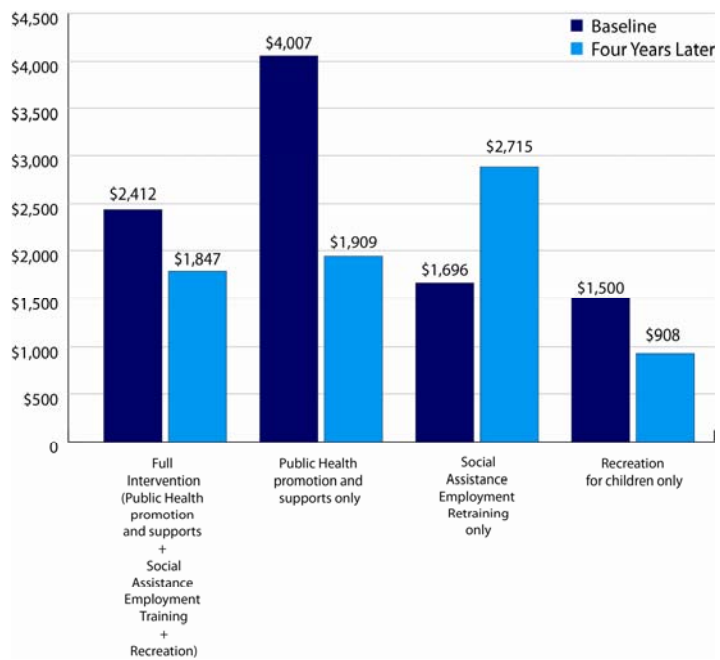
**Proportion of Parents
Not on Social Assistance
Four Years Later*
After Proactive Case
Management and Supports**

*Adapted from "When the Bough Breaks",
Dr. Gina Browne



**Per Child/Youth
Total
Expenditures
for Direct Use
of Health and
Social Services
(Four Years
Later)
4 to 16 Year
Olds**

*Adapted from "When the
Bough Breaks",
Dr. Gina Browne



Cost Per Year Per Participant in York Region

Program (2011)	Cost Per Participant Per Year
All Our Kids	\$ 45.00
PLAY	\$ 78.00
Camp	\$607.00
Youth Camp	\$406.00
After School Programs	\$731.00
Total Average cost per resident per year (or \$9.16 per month)	\$110.00

Where Social Services fits



Next Steps

Request:

- ☐ Receive for information

Next Steps:

- ☐ Shelter Review, Impacts & Proposed Recommendations/Next Steps
- ☐ Child Care & EIS Reforms and Impact
- ☐ Report Back on Outcomes of Reforms and Impacts