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EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES 2009 ANNUAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated April 27, 2010, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides Council with an update of the activities and initiatives of Early Intervention Services in 2009.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region directly delivers Early Intervention Services from six offices located across the Region, to children with special needs from birth to six years or school entry into Grade One. Early Intervention Services may provide consultative transition supports for children enrolled in Junior and/or Senior Kindergarten as needed until appropriate school supports are in place. Early Intervention Services are provided under the *Day Nurseries Act*, the *Child and Family Services Act* and the *Regulated Health Professions Act.*

Early Intervention Services works with a range of community stakeholders in supporting the development of children with special needs through direct service, family support, and service system navigation

Our clients are families with children aged birth through six years of age who have, or are at risk of having delays in development due to established or biological risk factors. In 2009 Early Intervention Services served a total of 2,128 children. Of these, 57.6% (1,224) had a diagnosed developmental special need, 19.2% (409) had some form of autism, while 24.0% (511) were born premature. The wide range of child needs seen by Early Intervention Services is reflected in the range of services offered, from prevention to treatment.

Many parents of children enrolled in Early Intervention Services are first time parents who had no indication during pregnancy that their child would have any developmental or health problems. Prior to enrolling, most had never had any experience with

individuals with special needs or the variety of services needed to support them. The family support we provide helps parents during this adjustment period to the new reality of the needs of their child. The broader publicly funded system that supports children with special needs has many pressures, and wait times of six months or more for specialized services are not uncommon. In 2009 the wait time for Early Intervention Services was ten weeks.

Private providers are often accessed by parents while waiting for the public services. However, many families do not have the financial means to access such services. Early Interventionists assist families in identifying government and private foundation funding for accessing other specialty services not directly provided by Early Intervention Services. In addition, the Integrated Social Work position in Early Intervention Services provides guidance and support to families with significant life needs who access multiple Regional services, (e.g. Social Assistance, Child Care, Housing and Early Intervention). The Integrated Social Worker serves to coordinate supports, reduce duplication and maximize overall service effectiveness.

Early Intervention Services provides a continuum of care through various services utilizing a one stop point of access approach

In order to assist parents in reaching the right service in a timely fashion, the Social Services Branch operates a toll free telephone line, 1-888-703-KIDS (5437) for information about, and referral to, Early Intervention Services, as well as the Preschool Speech and Language, Blind Low Vision and the Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Programs, delivered by Markham Stouffville Hospital. This one stop point of access helps to ensure that parents are connected quickly to Regional and community based services.

To ensure an accurate understanding of the child and family needs, which is necessary for the design of effective programming, children entering Early Intervention Services receive ongoing developmental assessments provided by cross disciplinary teams. These teams include parents, early interventionists, and as necessary speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists. All six Early Intervention Services' offices house co-located staff from Markham Stouffville Hospital Child Development Programs and the Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe-York. The team approach provides parents with an objective functional developmental view of their child's strengths and needs. This is essential in helping parents adjust to the reality of the special needs of their children.

Individual Family Support Plans are developed based on the assessment results. Individual and/or group child development programming is provided in the child's home, in the child care setting in which the child is enrolled, in the therapy rooms of the Early Intervention Services offices, and in other community settings as appropriate. The delivery of service in various environments helps to integrate the child into those environments and helps to reinforce the child's developing skills and socialization.

Through a funding contract with the Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe-York, service coordinators, occupational therapists and physiotherapists provide direct treatment for children enrolled in Early Intervention Services who have severe motor and complex developmental needs. This partnership brings another service "in-house", thereby reducing the stress for families in having to deal with many professional staff and many different agencies.

The system of services for children with special needs has developed over time with various agencies funded to provide specific services. The array of agencies and services can seem extremely confusing for first time parents with very young children and infants. Through service coordination and case management, Early Intervention Services empowers families in understanding and navigating the system of services that exists. Referrals for other appropriate services are facilitated and joint service planning meetings are conducted to ensure efficiency and reduce duplication.
Early Intervention Services staff support capacity building among other service providers by delivering training to staff of child care centres, community based programs and school boards. This includes work, currently underway with schools, in support of the rollout of the Provincial Early Learning Program for four and five year olds. In addition, Early Intervention Services' staff and management participate in a range of important collaborative initiatives within York Region and the broader community through community committees, Children's Treatment Network working groups, internal cross departmental committees, college and boards of education committees and province wide organizational boards and committees.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Growth in demand for Early Intervention Services exceeds the rate of child population growth in York Region

According to census data for York Region, the rate of population growth between 2001 and 2006 for children birth to four years of age was 16.5% and for children five through nine years of age was 10.1%. Early Intervention Services experienced significant increases in service demand between 2001 and 2006 which exceeded the rate of child population growth. Three main factors appear to be contributing to these increases:

- There are actual increases in the incidence of some developmental conditions such as autism, the survival rate for earlier born and more fragile premature infants, etc..
- Provincial initiatives to highlight early identification, such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, the Nipissing Screen, and the Enhanced 18-Month Well-Baby Visit, have raised awareness across various professional sectors.
- Greater professional and public awareness of research demonstrating the benefits of intervening early to prevent risks from becoming delays and for improving functional skills despite the presence of delays encourage referrals.

The increases in service demand and delivery are seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Increase in Service Demand and Delivery, 2006-2009

	2006	2009	Difference	% Increase
Total Yearly Referrals	709	843	134	19%
Newly Enrolled in Year	602	765	163	27%
Monthly Average Served	1,122	1,474	352	31%
Total Served in Year	1,574	2,128	554	35%
Monthly Average Wait List	121	151	30	24%

Early Intervention Services implemented various strategies to address service demands in 2009

- Office based service delivery was increased in 2009 reaching 6,050 hours, an increase of 5% over 2008 (5,761 hours) which in turn was a 37.5% increase over 2007 (4,188 hours). As a result, Early Intervention Services' use of office based service delivery is reaching a maximum limit.
- A new four initial "entry streams" (e.g. premature babies, children with an established diagnosis) process was initiated to facilitate faster access to appropriate levels of services.
- A Clinical Supervisor position was created through restatement of an existing vacant position. The position change resulted in quality improvement through better clinical direction for occupational therapy and physiotherapy positions.
- A Client Grouping Model tool and process was adopted to establish better criteria for service decisions by the occupational therapists and physiotherapists on staff.

A three year internationally recognized accreditation and strong participant survey results demonstrate high quality of Early Intervention Services in meeting family and child needs

In 2008 Early Intervention Services received a 3 year accreditation with a citation for "exemplary" practice across various aspects of program delivery from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. Early Intervention Services is the first program of its type to receive accreditation from this international organization in Ontario.

In addition, Early Intervention Services regularly seeks the perspective of families receiving services to determine their needs and satisfaction with the services provided.

Responsive changes in intervention approaches have resulted in the ongoing maintenance of high customer service satisfaction ratings in the face of increased service demand.

Table 2 identifies key question results of customer satisfaction surveys conducted at first point of face to face contact and at end of service conducted in 2009. These results indicate that from the first contact through exiting Early Intervention Services; families evidence an extremely high degree of customer service satisfaction with the services they received.

Table 2
Customer Satisfaction Survey Results, 2009

Type of Survey	Items rated	% of Ratings Satisfied/Very Satisfied
Initial Service Plan Meeting Survey	Information received was helpful	98%
	I left this meeting feeling encouraged and connected to services	98%
	My questions were answered	95%
End of Service Survey	Demonstrated a Family Centered philosophy	85%
	Satisfaction with Child Care consultation services	86%
	Quality of staff	100%
	Would recommend to others	100%
	Child made gains due to EIS	**98%**

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost of delivering the Early Intervention Services program in 2009 was $7,740,451 gross and $1,929,816 net. The Best Start Community Plans of 2006 and 2007/2008 highlighted the importance of Early Intervention Services and the increasing demand for those services. The Best Start plans identify maintaining or expanding Early Intervention Services with Best Start funding to address wait list numbers. The current Provincial announcement of a continuation of Best Start funding, while without detail, raises the possibility of an opportunity to meet this priority of the community planning process. The program was managed within the 2009 budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Early Intervention Services are delivered in a responsive and collaborative fashion in all local municipalities, benefiting special needs children and their families from across York Region.

7. CONCLUSION

The Early Intervention Services unit in the Social Services Branch plays a critical direct service and service system navigation role in the delivery of responsive and effective programming to children with special needs and their families. In a time of increasing demand, the work of this unit continues to be vitally important in helping families to manage effectively, while they are assisting children in making real gains in their day to day lives.

For more information on this report, please contact David Rennie, General Manager, Social Services at Ext. 2013.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.