

## *“With our Best Future in Mind”*

In June 2009, Dr. Charles Pascal, Special Advisor on Early Learning to the premier of Ontario, released his much anticipated provincial report *“With Our Best Future in Mind”*. Andrew Fleck Child Care Services fully endorses the report in its entirety as it has the potential to transform our fragmented services into a more positive and seamless experience for families by developing an integrated system. We are one of the oldest and most diversified non-profit, charitable, full-service early learning, child care and family support organizations in Ontario. Our mission is to support children and their families through high quality, inclusive services that meet their diverse developmental, early learning and child care needs. In preparation for the exciting changes recommended in the report we have completed a summary of each of our programs.

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### **Group Care Program**

#### **Mandate:**

Andrew Fleck Child Care Services has been providing childcare to the families of Lowertown since 1911. Our George St programs provide licensed childcare for 85 children between the ages of 18 months and 5 years of age.

Our Kindergarten & School Age Program at Riverview Alternative School offers a linked Kindergarten/early learning and care experience. This partnership provides a truly seamless collaboration between childcare and school. The School Age Program offers before and after school care for 30 children 6-12 years of age. The program is open to children attending Riverview Alternative and Vincent Massey.

Our Stittsville Program has 20 spaces for children attending junior and senior kindergarten and our school age program has 30 spaces offering care to children 6-11 years of age. All children attend the Stittsville Public School.

#### **Principles:**

The Andrew Fleck Child Care Services, Group Care Program is committed to providing the highest quality of care for children and families and implementing all of the following best practices to ensure this standard is met:

- All Early Childhood Educators working within the programs are registered with the College of ECE's or have otherwise approval from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

- Educators have scheduled non-contact planning time to complete on going program and learning assessments to support children and provide meaningful curriculum. Documentation of children's learning is necessary to determine developmental outcomes. Portfolios are used as a means to share this development with parents and through the use of pictures, documented outcomes and story panels, offer a window of opportunity for parents into their child's world of development. Primary educators and parents meet twice per year to review portfolios and set forth goals for their child(ren). This supports a collaborative partnership and engages parents in the understanding of the importance of play based early learning opportunities.
- All programs work within the *Early Learning for Every Child Today* (ELECT) curriculum framework and review how programs are meeting the 6 Principles of Statements throughout the year.
- Ongoing program evaluation is based upon the Ottawa Accreditation Benefits Children process which means the program is accountable to their purchase of service agreement of public dollars.
- Parents are engaged as partners in their child's learning as this is vital in supporting children's development.
- Professional Development opportunities are provided for the RECEs, ensuring they are well informed and continue to develop their skills.

***Vision:***

The result of the implementation of full day kindergarten and Child & Family Centers (CFCs) is that early learning and care programs will now focus on providing services for children between 0 and 3.8 years of age. We have carefully considered what best practices we feel are a priority to ensure our programs continues to provide the highest quality early learning and care program for our children and families.

We believe that:

- That early learning and care should be delivered in a public, non-profit system
- Non-profit programs should be allocated base funding to ensure stabilization
- Programs located in high risk/low-income neighbourhoods should be funded to offer a lower ratio program. At our George St program, for example, 15 % of our children at any given time are mandated by CAS to attend our early learning and care programs. Many of the children are not meeting age-appropriate development objectives when they enter the centre, the Educators should be able to provide support to individual children to support their success.
- Developing sustainable partnerships with other service providers to support a collaborative delivery of services to all families is a necessary and important component of all early learning and care programs.
- On going parent education opportunities, facilitated by RECE's, will support the development of parent's skills.

- Educators must have scheduled non-contact time; this ensures that they have the time to observe, assess, plan for and document the children's learning.
- Team Meetings are essential in ensuring that curriculum planning is meeting the developmental needs of all children. It allows for; environmental reviews, exchange of ideas, development of strategies, identification of individual child and group needs and ongoing program assessment to ensure that we are providing the highest quality of early learning and care possible.

We currently offer early learning and care for 185 children in four buildings across the City of Ottawa. We have reviewed the importance of each of these sites and propose, based on the information we have currently, the following response for each location:

Stittsville Kindergarten & School Age Program located in Stittsville Public School:

We are committed to remaining at this school site, providing service for Kindergarten and School children, until the implementation of full day kindergarten in either September 2013 or 2014. The Ottawa Carleton District School Board has expressed a willingness to directly operate extended day programs within each of its school sites that includes Christmas, March Break, PD days and summer holiday options. With this understanding we have expressed our willingness to investigate partnering with the school board to create a separate early learning and care space, that includes the child and family centre (CFC) concept as described in Dr. Pascal's report *With Our Best Future in Mind*. We are suggesting partnering to build a space, on Board property in exchange for returning to the Board, the current space we occupy at Stittsville public school

We are quite concerned about the lack of non-profit early learning and care options available for families in Stittsville and are prepared to offer a high quality program for children from 18 months to 3.8 years of age. If appropriate, the new location could also offer onsite JK & SK in partnership with the school board.

As a multi-service non-profit agency currently offering a breadth of services, including several city-wide programs, we are well resourced to operate a CFC, including early learning and care, in Stittsville. We have existing partnership agreements with many other agencies to further extend the opportunities and services that could be available at that location.

Riverview Kindergarten & School Age Program:

With the implementation of full day kindergarten at the Riverview Alternate Public School in September 2012, and the Boards commitment to offer an extended day program that includes Christmas, March Break, PD days and summer holiday options, our program will close.

We believe that the Riverview Alternate School would be an ideal site to demonstrate the effectiveness and community opportunities created by establishing a child and

family centre, operated by a large multi-service non-profit agency on a school property. We have shared with the Board our enthusiasm to partner with them to re-locating our existing services into a purposely built space that would also allow us to offer an early learning and care program for children 18 months to 3.8 years.

George St Programs:

Our programs located at George St, presently provide early learning and care to 85 children 18 month to 5 yrs of age. To ensure that these programs continue to be viable we are increasing our Toddler program capacity to 30 children, all located in our Cottage building. Our Preschool program will be exclusively located in our memorial building, on two floors, and increase to 48 children. We will support parental choice; if parents choose not to send their children to full day kindergarten children up to 4.8 yrs of age may remain in our preschool program.

To support a collaborative delivery of services to all children & families we are developing community use space in our memorial building. Our goal is to meet the CFC's objective to integrate services for children and families providing "one-stop opportunity" for parents. Our George St Programs would also have the opportunity to collaborate with neighbourhood schools, primarily York St Public School.

In conclusion:

By engaging in agency wide strategic planning we have carefully considered what is best for children and families and have carefully considered how we should adapt our services to be most effective. Our multi-service, non-profit agency has traditionally mirrored many of the integrated service concepts that identify a child and family centre. We are willing to continue to be active, engaged community partners and believe we have an important role to play in the establishment of CFCs.

Respectfully submitted by: Kate Carradine, Group Care Manager  
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