



“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 (AFCCS) 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 as recommended in the report we have completed a summary of each of our programs.

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Licensed Home Child Care

Mandate:

Licensed Home Child Care (HCC) has been offered by AFCCS since 1969.

All licensed homes are operated by self-employed child care providers and must meet the Ontario Day Nurseries Act standards.

Our program promotes each child’s emotional, social, cognitive and physical skills in a safe, caring environment that fosters healthy development and early learning. Our high quality service is facilitated through screening, supporting and training dedicated providers who offer child care in their own home.

Home Child Care providers are selected for their child care skills and their ability to provide children with a warm, inclusive and stimulating environment. The advantages of home child care include: lower child to provider ratio; an informal group setting; flexible and non traditional child care hours; as well as proximity to the family’s home, work and their child’s school. Home child care also provides the stability and consistency of a close relationship with one adult.

Professional staff visit all homes regularly to provide support, consultation and educational opportunities. Through their visits, Home Child Care Consultants monitor the homes and promote the highest standards of health, safety, nutrition and child development are met.

Growth and Innovation:

In 2008, AFCCS Home Child Care program began a strategic planning process. Guiding Principles were created to support various aspects of our work, some of which include: services to clients; team cohesiveness; and growth and innovation. Workplans and internal working committees were developed to proceed with the initiatives needed in order to grow and adapt to the changes in the child care sector. A plan to include providers in the process was put into effect to inform and include feedback before beginning to implement any new initiatives. Out of the process, the use of Nipissing Developmental Checklists, which are intended to identify various aspects of a child’s development that may require early intervention, have now been included in the program. In 2010, funding was secured to develop and implement a new training program. *“Being There for Babies and Toddlers- a holistic approach to meeting the needs of children in licensed Home Child Care”*, has been successfully delivered to providers affiliated with Andrew Fleck Child Care Services.

Presently, there are a multitude of initiatives in the HCC sector that have been created to enhance the quality of child care, while recognizing the changing landscape. Andrew Fleck has partnered with the community to develop an Accreditation tool and to implement the Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) document. These are but a few of the proposed projects that will ultimately strengthen the commitment to children and their needs.

Our vision:

In response to the changing landscape, AFCCS submitted recommendations to the City of Ottawa on opportunities for redefining the delivery of early learning and care services. Specific to Home Child Care, it was recommended:

“to establish a separate committee of City staff and community leaders to explore the continued viability of the HCC sector. This group would examine the benefits and challenges of the self-employed status of providers, recruitment and retention issues, identify potential ratio changes to the HCC sector that ensure quality and fair incomes, by-law options to ensure all Providers are affiliated with a licensed agency and investigate options to ensure that flexible and extended day care is available for Ottawa families working non-traditional hours.”

Self-employed status, recruitment and retention, and age ratios of children are ongoing challenges faced by licensed Home Child Care agencies. The struggle to retain providers in the licensed system is constant, as currently there are unreasonable and significant advantages to being unregulated. Unregulated providers are not required to follow equal standards, such as the age ratios that regulated home child care providers must adhere to. In essence, unregulated providers are able to care for more children than regulated providers who are supported and monitored on an ongoing basis.

In a report to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) in January 2008, “the Home Child Care Association of Ontario (HCCAO), reported that they represent more than 100,000 children on an annual basis, 60 agencies, and 7500 independent contractors. Also indicated in the report, that 85 percent of children are cared for outside the licensed group or home child care system.” These statistics reveal that only 15 % of children in child care are protected by any form of governance. *2007-2008 Annual Report Home Child Care Association of Ontario*

Irene J. Kyle, author of *Family Child Care in Canada*, states that “*While family child care may be the most common child care arrangement families make, it is also the most publicly neglected.*” *Transition Winter 2001-2002*. In most other industries, consumers are protected through the development of policy and regulation. When accessing unregulated child care, parents have fewer resources to assist in finding and screening providers who meet the same standards developed for licensed Home Child Care Agencies.

Ontario has the highest ratio of children permitted in unregulated care. It is time that we advocate for change. This can be done, as per our recommendation, through establishing a committee of City staff, community leaders and provincial representation, all of whom would explore the complexities and inequities faced by the licensed Home Child Care sector.

Home Child Care is a unique service with its own distinctive characteristics; a service that provides communities with flexible and personal care that meets the individual, ongoing needs of families. Everyone should have the right to be included in a system where care is monitored by an independent third party. A licensed model needs to be the primary option for all families seeking home child care.