

“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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Ontario Early Years – Ottawa South

Mandate: Since 2002 The Ontario Early Years Centre Ottawa South has played an important role in the local development and implementation of the “Best Start Initiative” in our local community. We offer early learning and literacy programs, parenting sessions, resources and support such as information and referral. We also coordinate the delivery of services and support offered by our program and others in our community to ensure children have the opportunities needed to develop to their full potential.

Principles:

- ◆ We develop and provide services and programs based on our community’s needs.
- ◆ We encourage, assist and support parents, families, caregivers and community partners in providing opportunities for children to develop to their full potential.
- ◆ We assess and revise the efficiency of our service delivery on an ongoing basis.
- ◆ We offer an environment and programs that facilitate, stimulate and promote readiness to learn.
- ◆ We are sensitive to the needs of every child and the adults in his life no matter what their title may be.

We strongly believe that Child and Family Centres should be universal and inclusive of all children and families including those living with challenges such as poverty, special needs, or newcomers to our country.

Vision:

We have been leading Ottawa South's Best Start planning table in the development and coordination of service delivery in Best Start neighborhood hubs by assessing community needs, building partnerships, and developing protocol and linkages with various service providers within our community. While the creation of neighborhood hubs has increased access to services, communication and collaboration between service providers, the reality is that the sustainability of these hubs is dependent on the will of participants, availability of physical space, and financial resources.

Dr. Pascal's vision of: "consolidating and re-engineering resources, governance and mandates of existing programs..." will eliminate competing mandates between agencies/programs and/or duplication of services. This consolidation will require that all service providers work together as a multi-service team to provide a whole breadth of services. This will ensure more communication, efficient sharing of information and better use of resources. It will also provide a platform for agencies to deliver intervention, outreach and support services such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, Early Years Public Health, and many other City wide services.

Our Ontario Early Years Centre has been proactive in our community by utilizing data such as the Social Risk Index, the Early Development Instrument and the experiences of front line workers to guide us when planning our service delivery. These tools help us identify high needs or high risk neighbourhoods and ensure that services are being delivered where they are needed. We are implementing the use of the ELECT framework into our programming to be more cohesive and speak a common language with all the other Early Learning and Care professionals that will be part of the child's life from birth to entry in school and beyond.

As lead of the Ottawa South Best Start Planning Table, we have been playing a key role in engaging service providers in joint planning to coordinate the delivery of supports and programs for children 0 to 6 years of age. By working with other service providers in our community, we are sharing resources such as physical space, human resources, equipment and specific area of expertise to increase supports to families as well as bring services where previously not available. We are also working diligently to ensure parents and families know where and how to access services. We collaborate with neighbourhood schools to put in place school readiness programs such as *School's Cool*, *Esso Family Math*, and *Literacy Fun for Families*. We seek families and caregivers feedback to ensure we understand their needs and their challenges. In short, we strive to help each child fulfill their full potential by supporting his family and community.

The Ontario Early Years Centre Ottawa South welcomes the creation of Best Start Child and Family Centres, as well as the opportunity to play a key role in the implementation and coordination of services, with excitement.