

Community Capacity Building for the Early Years in BC



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2013 PROGRESS REPORT

The ECD Evaluation Project provides an integrated shared measurement and reporting system for initiatives that build community capacity for early childhood development in BC. The partners in this evaluation process are Max Bell Foundation, Success By 6, United Way of the Lower Mainland, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Children First, Public Health Agency of Canada, Human Early Learning Partnership and local BC communities. Progress reports on the Community Capacity Building initiatives have been created for the years 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012.

In 2013, 114 early years' coordinators/managers and 798 stakeholders (participants at ECD tables) participated in online surveys that related to the ultimate outcome:

Communities support the development of all children and families.

As in previous years, data was collected relative to activity in the areas of Community Planning, Community Awareness Raising & Mobilization and Service Delivery. This document provides highlights of activity in 2012.

A more detailed report can soon be accessed on the Success By 6 website at: <http://www.successby6bc.ca/early-childhood-development/resources>

Community Planning

- Almost 1,700 people were involved in the 114 community Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiatives reporting in 2013.
- Reporting tables are working to improve outcomes for children and families in approximately 550 communities, large and small around the province
- Stakeholders reported an increase in the diversity of representation at the ECD tables which continue to include core groups of child and family serving partners. Topmost among these are:
 - Early childhood educators & child care providers (at 88% of tables)
 - Library/literacy groups (at 78% of tables)
 - Community non-profit agencies (at 76% of tables)
 - School districts (at 75% of tables)
 - Health authorities/Public Health (at 74% of tables)
 - Child Care Resource and Referral (at 64% of tables)
 - Aboriginal service organizations (at 61% of tables)
 - Strong Starts (at 61% of tables)
 - MCFD (at 56% of tables)
 - Family resource centres (at 51% of tables)
 - Professionals representing children with special needs (at 49% of tables)
 - Parents and grandparents of children 0-6 (at 49%)



At this stage, 90% of tables have an ECD plan in place or are in the process of developing a plan. 1,115 people were involved in creating or updating plans in the last 12 months. It appears that these plans are being utilized: 78% of stakeholders indicated that their tables are using their ECD strategic/ community plan to guide activity – a considerable improvement over previous years.

Dominant among strategies in the plans are those related to building collaboration

amongst community partners, raising public awareness and expanding local engagement in planning.

A considerable amount of research took place over the 12 month period and 91% of stakeholders reported that their research is being used to inform planning.

- 53% of coordinators reported that they had evaluated some specific programs and projects while 59% of stakeholders indicated that the results of these evaluations were being used for improvements. 77% of coordinators who reported using the results of last year's evaluation, indicated that they used them to build upon successes and make changes to their strategic plans. This is encouraging, relative to continued administration of this shared measurement system.

Top successes in the area of Community Planning, from the perspective of stakeholders, include:

- ✓ An improved ability to identify and/or address community needs
- ✓ An increased level of collaboration amongst community partners
- ✓ More effective coordination

From the perspective of stakeholders the greatest challenges facing the ECD tables continue to be related to funding pressures and not having enough time to dedicate to the work. Further the increase in the number of managers funded less than 20 hours per week for coordination may contribute to pressures related to getting the work of the tables done effectively.

Community Awareness Raising



ECD tables continue to promote a variety of messages through public education/awareness activities. Topmost among these (as indicated by more than 70% of reporting coordinators) are messages related to the range of programs and services, awareness of the research on the importance of ECD and awareness of Success By 6. These results are similar to the previous year; however the overall percentage of coordinators reporting promotion of various types of messages is reduced over the previous year. Whether this is due to reductions in resources and coordination time or changes in focus is unknown.

ECD tables reported using a wide variety of types of awareness raising methods over the past year. Foremost among these were ECD table sponsored events, information booths at community events, calendars and brochures. Again, the overall percentage of coordinators reporting different types of activities (although still relatively high) has dropped over the previous year.

- This year, for the first time we inquired about the use of social media in awareness raising (e.g. Facebook): 58% of tables reported using such tools.
- Overall, the percentage of coordinators reporting that their tables had either influence or decision making ability relative to ECD funding decisions dropped for the second year in a row with every funding source categorized. This is somewhat surprising. It could be expected that as tables become more established and services more integrated that the level of influence at the community level might increase. More research might be warranted in this area.
- 1,458 community volunteers participated in ECD planning tables and events in 2013. This represents a drop over previous years and it may be that with fewer events occurring, fewer volunteers were required.
- Participation of community leaders is significant although it dropped slightly in most categories measured this year, with the exception of Aboriginal leaders (82 involved) and First Nation Chiefs/Councillors (34).

At the same time, stakeholders reported that more families, including Aboriginal families are participating in ECD programs/events; 44% indicated that their table is seeing an increase in media coverage; 43% indicated that politicians and/or municipal leaders are showing more interest and support for the tables. Overall, 82% of stakeholders believe that their communities have an increased awareness of the importance of the early years.

Service Delivery



79% of coordinators reported that activities of various types had been undertaken to improve coordination, integration and partnership amongst service providers. Dominant among these were activities to improve coordinated service provision, gatherings for the purpose of information sharing and networking and joint training. The overall level of activity in the various categories was slightly reduced over the previous year; however, the level of joint training taking place around the province continues to be very significant and is at about the same level as in the previous year, with types of training being too many and varied to categorize. Stakeholders indicated that this activity is resulting in an increase of knowledge and skills

- 84% of coordinators reported on a variety of activities undertaken to address access barriers to services for children and families. Highest among these were barriers to families accessing ECD programs and barriers related to participation at ECD tables. There was a slight increase in activity related to addressing barriers for Aboriginal families and immigrant and refugee families over the previous year.

Amongst stakeholders:

- 74 % indicated that ECD services and supports in their communities have improved in the past 12 months
- 60% indicated that ECD services and supports have improved for Aboriginal families
- 28% indicated that access to food has improved for families living on a low income and 18% indicated that transportation to programs and services has improved.

Related to a question about social, economic or political changes that have occurred in communities or in BC overall in the past year, managers continue to report on the impact of challenging local economic situations and resulting unemployment as well as continued funding pressures, relative to ECD services and the coordination of ECD tables. Of particular note is the number of communities that reported an increase in “oil patch” families. Due to lack of local employment in these communities, fathers often work away in the oil fields for weeks at a time, leaving moms to cope with the challenges of single parenting. Community coalitions are working to support families who are facing this reality.

Fortuitously, the results of this years’ data collection point to continued mobilization of communities in the areas of local planning and coordination, community awareness raising and service delivery improvements and while the level of activity is slightly less than in the previous year, it is still very significant. Qualitative data collected from both managers and stakeholders show a continued commitment and passion for the work. It is encouraging to see that efforts to deliver joint training have not diminished. Hopefully these will result in an increased and shared ability to deal with the local economic and ECD funding pressures of the times.

Thank you, Children First and Success By 6 initiatives - you *are* making a difference for families in BC!