

# Children **FIRST**

TOGETHER WITH FAMILIES, REALIZING POTENTIAL

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## FALL NEWSLETTER



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### A Word From The Executive Director

During my tenure at Children First, the most frequently cited source of stress by parents has been the transition of their children to the school system. With the advent of full day learning, preschool age children are now beginning their school careers one full year earlier at the age of four. A single year to an adult may not seem overly significant but to a preschooler it represents one quarter of their lives to that point. Most children, including those with special needs, achieve a positive adjustment. However, for some families as well as the school system, supporting a child to achieve a positive adjustment and address their specific needs in the classroom poses a significant challenge. Compounding the problem, as identified by the school boards, is that some children with significant special needs are beginning school having not received any community services prior to enrollment. Research regarding child outcomes is unanimous in supporting the value of early intervention. We also know that the importance of children doing well in school cannot be overstated.

I am very happy to advise that a committee has been formed to examine how to strengthen community supports for families with children struggling with school transitions. It is coordinated by the local lead agency for children's mental health services, Hotel Dieu Grace Health Care, and includes several community preschool agency service providers and the school boards. The focus is on establishing

strategies to more effectively reach out to families with children who may have special needs before they enter the school system so that they can receive the services they require. The committee will also be looking for ways to better support families with children who are struggling in their initial adjustment to school.

This shall be my final contribution to the Children First newsletter series. After forty years of working in the children's services delivery system, including nearly eight years with Children First, the time has come to step aside so that Children First can move forward with new leadership. When I came to the agency, I was attracted by the seamless mixture of developmental, child care and children's mental health services and the agency's singular focus on working with families with very young children. My experiences over the years have only reinforced my belief that working with young families is the best and most effective way to make a positive difference in the lives of children.

The Board of Directors is currently undertaking a search process to appoint a new Executive Director. I am confident that the agency will be successful in securing strong new leadership who will soon discover what I already know - that Children First is a wonderful agency with wonderful staff that do great work in partnership with families.

- Mark Donlon



# ASK LAURIE

Laurie Dew, Resource Consultant



Dear Laurie,

*I am an Early Childhood Educator at a local child care centre working with toddlers. One of the biggest concerns I have is parents rushing in late in the morning resulting in upset and crying from the child at drop off. While I know crying is common, it is difficult for the parent and child to then separate from each other in a positive manner. What tips can I give parents to help them and their little one?*

- Sincerely, Toddler Teacher

Dear Toddler Teacher,

The situation you expressed is very common and you are not alone. The key is to look at the home and child care as a continuous loop. Many times parents may not realize that what happens before they bring their child to child care can have an impact on their day. When parents express concern to me about their child's behaviour in the mornings, we often start by talking about their routine. Do they find that they are rushed? Are they yelling or feeling impatient? Do they have a consistent routine they follow with regards to waking, eating and dressing? Often they report that they do not. One of the most helpful suggestions I give is for parents to get themselves ready before they get their children up. While no one likes to give up sleep, having 15 to 20 minutes to get themselves ready first, allows the opportunity to then focus on their children while they are helping them get dressed or eat. The other thing we talk about is getting everything ready the night before. This eliminates the frustration that comes from searching for things and gives the children a sense of organization and consistency of routine. This information is well and good, but how do you share it with parents? The easiest way is to let them know that you understand that mornings can be crazy and you are there for their little one as an extension of home. Explain that consistency between home and child care helps children

develop skills faster and more easily. You could suggest that they set aside a few moments to talk with you at drop off or pick up if convenient. This would also be a great opportunity to share with them the importance of letting you know verbally or through electronic means (e.g. Hi Mamma etc.) if their child slept well, ate breakfast or has had a change to their routine. The start of the school year is a good time to let parents know that you are their partners and are available to chat or even provide printed information for them should they have any concerns about their child (e.g. Triple "P" website, Parents Today etc.). Lastly, once you have established a rapport with your parents, discuss with them the benefits of a "quick drop off". Let them know that you are comfortable with approaching them and taking their child while crying and reassure them that they will likely settle soon after they leave. They are free to call later to check in. Share with them that if they convey in their face or by their tone of voice, that they are uncertain about leaving them, the children will pick up on this. Calmly voice to the child "Mommy / Daddy are leaving now but you will see them later." This avoids parents "sneaking off" and gives you a chance to convey reassurance verbally.

Hope this is helpful!

Happy Mornings!



# CENTRAL 33 LEAMINGTON HUB UPDATE

Back in our Spring newsletter, our Executive Director, Mark Donlon announced Children First's partnership in joining Central 33, Leamington Hub (33 Princess St., Leamington ON). Through a model of shared space and improved access to clear and meaningful information, the purpose of Central 33 is to foster greater collaboration across multiple organizations in order to improve response to families and people looking for support services.

Since that time, I have had the opportunity to utilize our new satellite office at the Leamington Hub. My name is Jennifer Burns and I am a Resource Consultant on the South West Infant and Child Development Team. At Children First, we provide services to children primarily within their home, child care and Early Learning Centres throughout Essex County.

By having our satellite office at Central 33, we now have access to a state of the art working space with the ability to work remotely using our tablets, an inter-office telephone system, and printing and photocopying capabilities.

Our county staff can now save time by avoiding travel to our main office in Windsor, as we are able to complete necessary paperwork at the Leamington Hub between home visits. Central 33 also offers meeting rooms and family and assessment rooms which give families the opportunity to meet Children First and other agency partners on site, if they so choose.

Since we are sharing work space with staff from Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, I have been able to coordinate joint visits, as well as schedule reviews and plan of care meetings between both agencies, thus saving time by not having to make multiple phone calls to coordinate meetings.

As a result of Children First's partnership at Central 33 with Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, City of Windsor-Social Services Department, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit and Community Living Essex, I anticipate the ability to continue to see county families in a more timely manner, increase our connections and strengthen relationships with our community partners in a cost effective way.

Jennifer Burns, R.ECE., R.T. *Resource Consultant*

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Children First is proud to be accredited by the Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA) which offers a third-party review process that is tailored to community-based organizations. CCA accreditation is based on widely-accepted best practice standards that promote ongoing quality improvement and responsive, effective community services.





## Promoting Early Development (PED) & Screening and Calling All 2 & 3 Year Olds Events

### **BACKGROUND:**

In 2013, the Windsor-Essex Public Health Unit, Children First, and the City of Windsor-Ontario Early Years Centres responded to school boards indicating that children were arriving at school unprepared to learn, and without having received any early intervention support. These three agencies partnered to develop the Promoting Early Development Screening events (PED). All three partners also participate in the Annual Calling All 2 and 3 Year Olds community event that involves additional community partners in an effort to identify preschoolers prior to their JK entry and allow time for early intervention before entering school.

### **WHERE ?**

Both PED and Calling All 2 and 3 Year Olds events have been scheduled for the remainder of 2016 and are typically held in locations already familiar to families. They may include local Ontario Early Years Centres (throughout Windsor and Essex County), Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, or recreation facilities/libraries.

### **WHAT?**

Both the PED and Calling All 2 and 3 Year Olds screening events are meant to provide early screening and information about support and services in our community. Each family is provided with a “Learning to Play and Playing to Learn: What Families Can Do” booklet. The family can then visit any of the areas set up, including developmental screening, behaviour consultation, dental screening, hearing consultation, vision information, nutrition screening and speech and language consultation.

Beyond the screening and information, each parent is provided with guidance or support to make any necessary referrals for additional help. Information is also provided on other helpful community resources available for preschoolers.

# Upcoming Dates/Screenings:

## **PROMOTING EARLY DEVELOPMENT (NEWBORN TO AGE 5)**

**Thursday, Oct. 6, 2016:**

12 noon - 7 p.m. at South Essex Community Council in Leamington- PED Event with Speech & Audiology screening available as well.

## **CALLING ALL 2 AND 3 YEAR OLDS: (AND SIBLINGS UP TO AGE 6)**

**Saturday, Oct. 15, 2016:**

10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. – Windsor Public Library, Main Branch, 850 Ouellette Avenue, Windsor

**Wednesday, October 19, 2016:**

9:30-11:30 a.m.- Building Blocks for Better Babies- Full Gospel Tabernacle, 285 Talbot Road East, Leamington

1:00-3:00p.m. New Canadians' Centre of Excellence, 3235 Sandwich St., Windsor

To find out more information about upcoming Promoting Early Development and Calling All 2 and 3 Year Olds events, please visit our websites:

[www.wechu.org](http://www.wechu.org) (look under classes & clinics)

[www.children-first.ca](http://www.children-first.ca)





# BUILDING CAPACITY

## CHILDREN FIRST HOSTS THE OAICD LEARNING INSTITUTE

For the second time in six years, Children First is pleased to host the Ontario Association for Infant and Child Development (OAICD) Learning Institute. The theme of this year's conference, "The Best of Both Worlds: The Intersection of Infant & Child Development and Infant Mental Health" aligns with our philosophy of providing early intervention services to children and families in a holistic way. Furthermore, this demonstrates the organization's ongoing commitment to ensure that our staff and the community at large are provided with high quality continuing education and remain up-to-date on the latest evidence based practices and latest research in early intervention. The conference this year is hosting a number of internationally renowned speakers such as Dr. Peter Rosenbaum, Professor of Paediatrics at McMaster University and Co-Founder, CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research; Dr. Robin McWilliam, the head of The RAM Group, a community of practice consisting of experts in the Routines-Based Model for early intervention and the recipient of the Mary McEvoy Award for Service to the Field, the top honor in the fields of early intervention and early childhood special education; Dr. Susan Spieker, Professor of Family & Child Nursing at the University of Washington, where

she is also a research affiliate with the Barnard Center for Infant Mental Health and Development and the Center on Human Development and Disability; and Dr. Jean Clinton, Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster, division of Child Psychiatry. In addition, many workshops are being presented by staff working in the early intervention field in Ontario and the United States. Three workshops are being offered by staff from Children First.

The Learning Institute offers cutting edge practices and research in key areas of early intervention including family-centered practice, the theory of engagement, and the importance of delivering service in the child's natural environment with a focus on functional outcomes. Engagement theory weaves together research on social-emotional development, learning, functioning, resilience, caregiving, and teaching styles. The conference will be held this year at Caesars Windsor from October 19 to October 21.

For more information, please visit [www.oaicd.ca](http://www.oaicd.ca)





# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

## AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is changing the way child and youth mental health services are delivered across Ontario through a process called “*Moving on Mental Health*.” Through the course of the Ministry’s exploration of needs within mental health services, research has shown that engaging families as equal partners in service delivery and in treatment planning, contributes to positive mental health outcomes for children and youth. As a result, Family Engagement is increasingly being accepted as best practice for providing quality service and support (Chovil, 2009). Therefore, to support the needs of our children and youth, local mental health agencies, including Children First, have been asked to partner with families to improve the way services are provided in our community.

Children First has consistently worked from a family-centred model of care which recognizes families are experts in the needs of their children, promotes equal partnerships with families and service providers, and supports the family’s role in decision making for their child. However, we recognize that Family Engagement goes beyond this and calls for not only individual agencies but, rather, the larger community of agencies to develop a positive parent-professional relationship. It is key to have a relationship with parents that promotes equality, empathy, mutual respect, trust, open communication which includes the sharing of information, service coordination, advocacy, mutually agreed upon goals, shared planning and decision making (Fereday et al., 2010).

We recognize Family Engagement is a gradual process of transformation, one that will not happen overnight. Our hope is to invest in obtaining an accurate understanding

of family concerns, challenges, and ideas for change and growth. This approach will empower families to be involved with both their child’s care, as well as the development of supportive and inclusive services that will result in positive changes for our children and their families.

If you are interested in being part of the Family Engagement Committee here at Children First, please let us know by contacting Kim Court at 519-250-1850, ext. 288. We are asking for an initial commitment of 12 months beginning this fall with 4-6 meetings across that time. As we move forward with our endeavour there will be an option to extend membership after the first year, if you wish.

### References

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (2012). Family Engagement Participant Guide. Retrieved August 3, 2016 from [http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/docs/family\\_engagement\\_participant\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/docs/family_engagement_participant_guide_en.pdf).

Chovil, N. (2009). Engaging Families in Child and Youth Mental Health: A Review of Best, Emerging, and Promising Practices. Retrieved July 10, 2012, from <http://www.forcesociety.com/sites/default/files/Engaging%20Families%20in%20Child%20%26%20Youth%20Mental%20Health.pdf>.

Fereday, J., Oster, C., & Darbyshire, P. (2010). Partnership in practice: What parents of a disabled child want from a generic health professional in Australia. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 18, 624-632.



**For upcoming community events, check out the following websites:**

[www.children-first.ca](http://www.children-first.ca)

[www.citywindsor.ca](http://www.citywindsor.ca)

[www.autismontario.com](http://www.autismontario.com)

[www.reconnectwindsor.ca](http://www.reconnectwindsor.ca)