



Children First

PARENT
HANDBOOK

A Family Centred
Early Intervention Program
for Children, Birth to Six

Supporting children and families
for more than 30 years.

Welcome to Children First

We provide individualized services to families with children from birth to 6 years of age who are at risk for or who are experiencing developmental or mental health challenges.

Our Mission

is to support children and families through early intervention as they build a strong foundation for today and tomorrow.

You have made the first step by contacting us about your child. We are looking forward to our journey together.

In order to begin with Children First, you must first consent to your child's involvement. As part of our intake process, we will discuss any custody and access arrangements and as best practice, request documentation that may clarify custody and access arrangements (and subsequent updates).

CONTACT INFORMATION:

**105-2565 Ouellette Avenue
Windsor, Ontario N8X 1L9**

Our office is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 4:30. We are able to accommodate meetings and visits outside of these hours. Some of our group programs, counselling clinics and seminars are offered in the evenings.

We can be reached:

By Phone: (519) 250-1850

By Fax: (519) 250-1477

There is no cost for our service.

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WHAT WILL PARTNERING WITH CHILDREN FIRST INVOLVE?

Every Children First professional involved with your family has developmental and/or mental health expertise and we will work in partnership with you to address the needs of your child and family. You will have a Primary Partner, who will be your main point of contact with Children First. Your Primary Partner is part of a multidisciplinary team. Information about your child and family will be reviewed within this team in order to ensure that we are meeting your needs.

We may meet in your home, in a child care centre, or an Ontario EarlyOn Centre because we believe that children learn best in familiar environments.

We find that children will be more successful at achieving their goals when all caregivers, across all environments are using the same strategies. To assist with this, we can extend our consultation/support and strategies to early learning and child care programs throughout Windsor and Essex County so that they are better able to address the needs of your child. If you have a private child care provider or respite provider who will assist in carrying out intervention strategies, we would be pleased to assist you in sharing these techniques with them as well.

Children First recognizes the importance of privacy and the sensitivity of personal health information. We adhere to the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 (“PHIPA”). Any and all information provided to us is treated in a confidential manner. We require consent, signed by the legal guardian, before we share information outside of Children First.



YOUR INDIVIDUAL FAMILY PLAN:

As the parent/caregiver of your child, we know that you are the greatest observer of your child's development.

Your Primary Partner will work with you to develop an Individual Family Plan based on your family's strengths, needs, and goals. This plan may include other services including speech and language therapy, social work, occupational therapy and psychology. Your plan will consider the "F-words":

- **Function:** What your child can do and what he/she might do differently.
- **Family:** You know your child best. We will listen to you and work as partners.
- **Fitness:** Every child needs to be fit and healthy as they grow.
- **Friends:** Friendships and a sense of belonging are important.
- **Fun:** Children learn and grow through play.
- **Future:** Together we will set the foundation for tomorrow.

For more information about the F-words please visit:

[canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/
f-words-in-childhood-disability](https://canchild.ca/en/research-in-practice/f-words-in-childhood-disability)

If it is determined that your child or family's needs are best addressed by another community service provider, with your consent, we will assist you in accessing those services with a warm-handoff to ensure a seamless transition of services.

CLINICAL RECORD:

Your child will be a registered participant and will have an electronic clinical record. This record captures our involvement with your child and family. It will include all the information we receive or generate, including but not limited to intake information, identifying demographic information, assessment reports, Individual Family Plans, contact and case notes, all reports or correspondence from other professionals, any legal documents received, consent forms, and discharge information. It is essential to ensure confidentiality and security in maintaining personal health records. The agency ensures that records are protected from destruction, loss, and unauthorized removal or access.

You will receive copies of reports and correspondence written by staff of Children First as they occur and pertain to your child. When parents are separated or divorced, it is generally beneficial for children that intervention strategies and reports also be shared with the non-custodial parent if they have a relationship with the children. If parents live in separate households and share custody, service can be made available to both parents and reports are addressed accordingly.

As the child's parent/legal guardian you have the right to review your child's file. Also, you can request a correction be made to your personal or health information or that of your child at any time.



OUR MENU OF SERVICES

Our program is available in different formats, depending on the needs of your child and family. In addition to the Primary Partner approach as described, we also offer:

- a. **Single session:** a planned, scheduled single session therapeutic social work intervention which provides families with the opportunity to explore strengths, develop coping strategies and build confidence or acquire information to assist them in managing their current situation.
- b. **Brief Service:** the use of a time limited therapeutic social work intervention where no more than three (3) sessions occur within a six-week time frame.
- c. **Intensive Short Service:** available to families who have children who are presenting with mental health or developmental needs, where intensive short services would be appropriate to meet the immediate needs of the child and family.
- d. **Seminars:** available on a scheduled basis and will cover various topics. Participants will be provided with the most current information on parenting and developmental topics. Participants will be provided practical information and tangible tools to implement based on their specific situation.
 - o Seminars are open to the community and participants do not need to be registered with the agency.
 - o Families who are registered with Children First shall also be made aware of the seminars as appropriate for the goals identified in their Individual Family Plan.
- e. **Groups:** offered to registered children and their families and the larger community. These groups can be a method of treatment, a way to support you or your family, and an opportunity to connect with other parents. Please go to **children-first.ca** for details about the various groups and talk to your Primary Partner if interested.

CRISIS SERVICE

Children First does not provide crisis service.

- o If your child is at immediate risk to harm him/herself or another person proceed to the Emergency Room of the Windsor Regional Hospital-Metropolitan Campus or
- o Call 911 Emergency (Ambulance/Fire/Police)
- o For adults in crisis, contact Community Crisis Centre of Windsor/Essex County (24-hour Crisis line) Telephone: 519-973-4435 or hdgh.org/crisis

HOW LONG WILL MY FAMILY BE INVOLVED WITH CHILDREN FIRST?

The length of involvement will vary based on your child's/family's needs.

Your family may be discharged from our program when:

- o Your child/family has achieved the Individual Family Plan goals.
- o Your child's/family's needs can be met more appropriately by another agency.
- o Your child has reached the age limit for the designated Ministry program.
- o Your family chooses to end the service.
- o We are unable to contact your family.
- o Your family moves out of our jurisdiction.

We know families who are best able to move on are those who have control over the process and have been given enough time to plan and prepare for closure.

Your family may be referred to or provided information regarding alternate or additional services and community supports that may be appropriate to sustain achieved success or support ongoing capacity building, coping and adaptation.

DIVERSITY

At Children First we strive to acknowledge and respect the diversity of our community as it relates to language, culture, religion, physical/emotional/mental health, and/or sexual orientation. Access to our services is not limited based on any of the above. We wish to learn more about how our services can be delivered in ways that are helpful, sensitive, and respectful of your family's beliefs, values, customs and culture. Please help us to know of any special consideration(s).

We provide service in English and French. We can arrange for an interpreter if you need assistance, or you can invite someone you know to translate for us.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES:

While you and your family are receiving services from Children First, you have the right:

- to be a full partner in all aspects of your child and family's involvement;
- to know the name and role of those involved with your family team;
- to be informed of the possible risks and benefits of all treatment options and whenever the intervention/treatment changes;
- to be treated with dignity and respect, without discrimination;
- to have your personal information treated in confidence and used in a way that respects your wishes;
- to a welcoming, accessible, safe and secure service environment;
- to receive services in a format suitable to your own learning and communication style or needs;
- to bring forward a concern or complaint and have access to a complaint resolution process;
- to withdraw consent at any time; and
- discontinue your voluntary involvement with Children First.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

- Actively participating in all aspects of your child and family's involvement with us;
- Providing accurate and timely information about your child and family;
- Asking questions to ensure you understand;
- Treating others with dignity and respect, without discrimination; and
- Notifying Children First if you no longer wish to participate in services.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

It is important that you are aware of the risks and benefits of service before you and your child consent to and participate in services with us. Please ensure that you understand all of the information and that you have asked us, and have received answers to, every question you may have. You can ask us questions about this information at any time, even after you start service.

We support children and families through early identification and intervention services while providing you and your child every opportunity for success.

There are many benefits to services:

- We can provide information about your child's functioning.
- We can support you with understanding your child's strengths and needs and the factors influencing those needs.
- We can provide support to encourage improved functioning in your home or other settings.
- Your relationships within the family may improve.
- You may experience less stress and worry.
- We may identify concerns that were not apparent at the outset of service, and we may be able to help you and your child with these concerns as well.
- We can support your child and family in accessing other relevant services.

It is important to realize that there are also risks associated with any service, and there are consequences of working with an agency like ours that you may not have expected.

Other risks that can arise as a result of your or your child's participation in this service include:

- Early intervention will not help every child and family. Although we will always do our best to help the children and families whom we serve, some will not experience beneficial changes. For some children and families, an issue or condition might become more difficult or problematic during or after service.
- We may ask you and your child questions or discuss issues that might be sensitive and raise uncomfortable feelings for you, your child or your family.
- We may provide feedback or communicate a diagnosis which you did not anticipate or do not agree with.
- Additional concerns may be identified other than concerns and questions initially brought forward for this service, and this may cause you upset.

Children and families participating in service should also be aware that we (and all agencies like Children First) collect and use personal information in order to provide treatment and other services. Some of the consequences of this include:

- Although our service is voluntary, if serious needs have been identified (medical, physical, emotional and social) that are not being addressed through service with our agency or another agency within the community, we may be required to report to Children's Aid Society about implications of lack of follow through and risk for your child.
- If we become aware of other child protection risks these must be reported to the Children's Aid Society, as required by law. For more details go to:

children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/childrensaid/reportingchildabuseandneglect_EN.pdf

- You may be asked personal information about your child, yourself, and extended family members and that information may be included as file information or as part of a report.
- With your permission, we may seek out information from other sources (e.g., child care, school, babysitter), and in turn, identify that Children First services are being provided.
- The information that we collect is stored in your child's file and might be accessed in the future without your consent (as required by law or professional standards).

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Your privacy is very important to us. We are committed to protecting the privacy of those who receive services from us, our employees, volunteers, donors and other stakeholders. Our Privacy Policy explains how we collect, use and share personal health information about families in our program. Please review our Privacy and Confidentiality Policy to find out more about our information practices. It is also available on our website at **children-first.ca**.

All Children First staff, volunteers, students and Board members sign an Oath of Confidentiality.

We are confident our policies meet or exceed the privacy standards established by the laws in Ontario.

- o We collect and use personal information as reasonably necessary to provide quality services, conduct regular business practices, and comply with legal requirements.
- o Personal information is usually collected directly from the person to whom it pertains (or the person who is legally entitled to make decisions for that person, such as a parent).
- o We do not share personal information with anyone outside of Children First without first obtaining consent from the individual to whom the information pertains (or the person who can make decisions for that person) except as required by law.

Limits of confidentiality occur only as required or permitted by law and ethical standards.

We are required to disclose personal information:

- o In situations of suspected child abuse or neglect;
- o In situations of imminent harm (where there is clear and imminent risk of serious bodily harm to someone or possibility of harm);
- o Mandatory reporting by a regulated health professional of another regulated health professional who has sexually assaulted a client;
- o In the context of legal proceedings to comply with a summons or court order;
- o To comply with the requirements of our accreditors and professional regulatory bodies;
- o To researchers, where legislative and specific policies have been met.

For questions or concerns about your rights and privacy please speak with any professional with whom you are involved or contact our Privacy Officer:

Mental Health and Quality Improvement Manager
519-250-1850 ext. 256
privacyofficer@children-first.ca

For further information on privacy and your rights contact:

Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario
2 Bloor Street East, Suite 1400, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 1A8
1-800-387-0073
ipc.on.ca

OPPORTUNITIES TO BECOME INVOLVED

We promote parent involvement as volunteers, mentors, participants for focus groups, service evaluation, etc. and appreciate your expressions of interest in such activities. If you would like to provide support and/or input into the work of Children First, please let your Primary Partner know.



WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK!

We look forward to working with your family, and value your opinions about our partnership and the services we provide. We will be asking you to comment on your experience with our services at various times, such as during Individual Family Plan reviews or after participating in a group. Upon discharge from our services, we will also ask you to complete a family satisfaction survey. Offering us your input (compliments or concerns) in a timely way helps us understand what is working well for your child and family, and what changes we might make to improve our services.

Children First is committed to providing accessible customer service to all persons with visible and non-visible disabilities. We welcome your comments about our service and any barriers you may have encountered. A copy of our Accessibility and Customer Service policy is available upon request.

If you have a concern:

1. Please talk about it directly with the staff person to whom it relates, as soon as possible, so that it may be resolved.
2. If the concern is not resolved, you may request a phone call or meeting with the staff person's supervisor.
3. If you feel your concern is not addressed to your satisfaction, you are welcome to ask that it be directed to the appropriate manager.
4. The manager will initiate an investigation into your concern and contact you within 10 calendar days with the proposed resolution. It is important that the outcome and any resolution be communicated with you directly either verbally or in writing.
5. If you feel that the steps above have not resolved your concern, you may contact our Executive Director.
6. Where the issue is still not resolved satisfactorily, you may submit a written request for review by the Board of Directors.

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