




Alberta Children's Services

## Parent Links



*A network of resource centres  
serving parents, caregivers and  
children in Alberta*

September 2004

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caregivers and children in Alberta*

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## Executive Summary

*Children are our most valuable natural resource.*

—Herbert Clark Hoover

Research over the past decade has shown that parenting has a powerful impact on children’s learning and behaviour. It has also shown that **parents need support** and that comprehensive, community-based parent resource programs can have positive, long-term effects on child development.

In 2003, Alberta Children’s Services commissioned an environmental scan to investigate the types of support available to Alberta parents. The scan reviewed current research about early childhood development, parenting and effective family support practice. Through a province-wide survey of community programs, it collected data about the structure of Alberta’s family resource centres, the range and availability of the services they offer, and the demographic profile of users of these services.

The survey results identified three key issues facing parent resource centres in the province:

- Fewer than 10% of survey respondents provide comprehensive services for children and parents.
- Services are not always available to parents at convenient times. Most programs operate during the day and do not offer evening or weekend hours.
- Centres operate in relative isolation and according to different standards of excellence. Programs are not linked to a provincial network that could provide opportunities to share information, ideas and best practices.

The environmental scan identified a need for comprehensive, high-quality, community-based programs to help parents give their children the best possible start.

**Alberta Children's Services is responding to this challenge by establishing the Parent Links program.** The objectives of the program are

- to support Alberta's parents in their role as their children's first and most influential teachers
- to link Alberta's parenting programs and services through a province-wide network that promotes excellence; facilitates the sharing of resources, knowledge and best practices; fosters the creation of partnerships; and encourages cooperation on projects of value to the network as a whole, as well as to individual members

Parent Link centres are community planned and community based. They are **centres of excellence** that provide parents and families with comprehensive support in the form of four core services:

- parent education
- early childhood development and care
- family support
- information and referrals

The centres comply with province-wide operational and programming standards to ensure that all parents have access to similar types of services and the same standards of excellence.

In 2004–2005, in addition to the \$5 million it already spends on family support programs, Alberta Children's Services committed \$6 million dollars to establish 16 Parent Link centres across the province. By 2007, a network of up to 44 Parent Link centres—firmly rooted in their communities—will provide information, education, counselling and resources to help parents and families raise healthy, well-adjusted children who can become good citizens of Alberta and good citizens of the world.

## Children: Alberta's Future

*There can be no greater accomplishment for Albertans than to raise healthy and strong children who are confident in their knowledge and their abilities, optimistic about their future, and compassionate in the way they interact with their peers, their community and the world at large.*

—Speech from the Throne, Fourth Session of Alberta's Twenty-fifth Legislature, February 17, 2004

Raising healthy, strong children is everyone's business. Parents, families, neighbourhoods, communities, governments and even nations all have a role in giving children a good start in life.

As their children's first teachers, parents and families play a key role in providing children with the skills, tools and confidence they need to fulfill their potential, succeed at learning and grow into healthy, productive adults.

**Alberta Children's Services' network of Parent Link centres** provides information, education, counselling and resources to help parents and families do the best job they can. Working with governments, communities and parents themselves, Parent Link centres give families the support they need to raise, healthy, well-adjusted children who can make a contribution—as good citizens of Alberta and good citizens of the world.

## Alberta's Commitment

*Ensuring that children are safe, healthy and ready to learn is the most important goal of any society. Investing in families and communities through services that support healthy child and youth development creates the foundation for a strong society and economy.*

—Alberta Children's Services [online; cited July 6, 2004],  
<[www.child.gov.ab.ca/acyi/page.cfm?pg=index](http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/acyi/page.cfm?pg=index)>.

The Government of Alberta understands that investing in children is “an investment in the human potential of the province.”\* It is committed to helping all the province’s children get the best possible start in life.

Alberta acts on its commitment to optimal child development through a number of integrated initiatives that support parents:

- The **Alberta Response Model** adopted in 2001 provides the foundation for an integrated, community-based approach to address the needs of families and children.
- The **Government of Alberta business plan** for 2004–2007 identifies parenting skills and child development as performance measures related to Goal 3, which states: “Alberta’s children and youth will be supported in reaching their potential.”
- The cross-ministry **Alberta Children and Youth Initiative (ACYI)** identifies the establishment of parent resource centres as a means of ensuring that children and youth are “well cared for, safe, successful at learning and healthy.”†
- **Alberta’s Early Childhood Development Strategy** recognizes the importance of helping parents and families create a positive home environment and give their children a healthy start.

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\* *Government of Alberta Strategic Business Plan, 2004–2007* [online PDF file, p. 23], March 24, 2004 [cited July 4, 2004],  
<[www.finance.gov.ab.ca/publications/budget/budget2004/govbp.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/publications/budget/budget2004/govbp.pdf)>.

† *Ibid.*, p. 35.

- The 2003 report of the **Alberta Learning Commission** recommends the **establishment of parenting centres** as a way of promoting school readiness for children.

**The Parent Link program builds on these initiatives. The program recognizes that supporting parents in their role as a child's first and most influential teachers and caregivers is key to fostering optimal child development.**

## Parenting Defined

*Positive parent–child relationships support the development of healthy, responsible and happy children.*

—*Parenting and Family Supports: Moving Beyond the Rhetoric Together* [online, p. 1]. A position paper published by the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, July 2001 [cited July 4, 2004], <[www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF](http://www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF)>.

In this document, the term “parent” includes any individual who has a significant relationship with a child and contributes to the child’s care. Within this context, “parent” can mean the child’s biological or adoptive mother or father, a foster parent, grandparent, relative, teacher, friend, neighbour or child care provider.\*

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\* This broad definition of parents is accepted by the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs. See *Parenting and Family Supports: Moving Beyond the Rhetoric Together* [online PDF file, p. 1], July 2001 [cited July 4, 2004], <[www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF](http://www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF)>.

## Other Terms Used in this Document

**The Ministry** is Alberta's Ministry of Children's Services.

**The Minister** refers to Alberta's Minister of Children's Services.

**CFSAs** are Alberta's **Child and Family Services Authorities**, which deliver programs on behalf of the Minister in 10 regions of the province.

**FCSS** is the **Family and Community Support Services Association of Alberta**, a network of municipalities and Métis settlements that deliver community-based social programs under a funding partnership in which the Alberta government pays 80% of program costs.

**RHAs** are **Regional Health Authorities**, which plan, deliver and are accountable for the results of health services provided in the province's nine health regions.

## About the Parent Link Program

### Background and Needs Assessment

The establishment of “cross-ministry, community-based parent resource centres” is a key component of Alberta Children’s Services’ strategy to provide preventive “supports for all children, youth and families.”\*

#### The Ministry’s Parent Link program turns this strategy into action.

The need for Parent Link resource centres was established by an environmental scan commissioned by the Ministry in 2003. The scan included a survey sent to 428 organizations that provide parent and family support services in Alberta. The survey was distributed to a cross-section of family service providers, including members of the following organizations:

- Alberta Association of Early Intervention Professionals
- Alberta Association of Services for Children and Families
- Alberta Home Visitation Network Association
- Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs

**The Alberta Children’s Services business plan for 2004–2007 identifies three core businesses, each of which has a number of goals.**

- Core Business 1: Promoting the development and well-being of children, youth and families.
- Core Business 2: Keeping children, youth and families safe and protected.
- Core Business 3: Promoting healthy communities for children, youth and families.

Establishing parent resource centres is one of the strategies related to Core Business 1, Goal 1: “Children and youth will have a healthy start in life and the supports they need to reach their potential.”

\* *Children’s Services Business Plan 2004–07* [online PDF file, pp. 120–123], March 24, 2004 [cited July 4, 2004], <[www.finance.gov.ab.ca/publications/budget/budget2004/child.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/publications/budget/budget2004/child.pdf)>.

- Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program
- Child and Family Services Authorities
- Community Action Program for Children
- Family and Community Support Services partnership
- Military Family Resource Programs

#### **2003 Environmental Scan**

The Ministry of Children's Services worked with staff from Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Learning, and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to develop appropriate survey questions.

The 172 responses received provided valuable data about the structure of family resource centres in the province, the range and availability of the services they offer, and the demographic profile of users of these services.

### **The 2003 Environmental Scan**

The 2003 environmental scan

- reviewed current research about the needs of parents and children
- reviewed current literature about effective family support practice
- examined early childhood development programs across Canada
- reviewed the program models for parent resource centres in other jurisdictions, both in Canada and the United States
- identified the types of support currently available to Alberta parents
- developed a profile of parent and family support programs available in Alberta

*Key findings with regard to Alberta's current situation and the results of the research and literature reviews are summarized in the following sections.*

## **The Current Situation**

Alberta's parent resource centres are currently funded through centre-specific combinations of federal, provincial and municipal sources supplemented by program fees, donations and fundraising activities. Current funding sources include

- Health Canada
- Alberta Children's Services, which now contributes \$5 million via the province's Child and Family Services Authorities and Family and Community Support Services programs
- Alberta Health and Wellness, via the province's Regional Health Authorities
- the United Way and other foundations
- parent fees

Alberta's current parent resource centres differ in size, scope, administrative structure and program delivery methods, as well as in the range and nature of the services they provide. They respond to a variety of family and community needs.

## **Key Issues**

The 2003 environmental scan identified three key issues facing parent resource centres in Alberta:

- Fewer than 10% of survey respondents provide comprehensive services for children and parents.
- Services are not always available to parents at convenient times. Most programs operate during the day and do not offer evening or weekend hours.
- Centres operate in relative isolation from one another and according to different standards of excellence. Programs are not linked to a provincial network that could provide opportunities to share information, ideas and best practices.

## Research Results: What We Know about Parenting

Research over the past decade has shown that “positive outcomes for children require comprehensive supports for [parents and] families.”\* Specific findings include the following:

- Parenting has a powerful impact on children’s learning and behaviour.
- The environment provided by parents and other caregivers during pregnancy, infancy and early childhood is crucial to laying a good foundation for later development.
- “Good nutrition, nurturing and responsive care giving in the first years of life, linked with good early childhood development programs, improve outcomes for all children’s learning, behaviour and physical and mental health throughout life.”†
- Parenting plays a key role in children’s academic success.
- Optimal child development depends on the emotional health and well-being of parents. Parents’ understanding of children’s behaviour and their ability to read developmental cues influences the way they interact with their children.
- Building parents’ skills and support networks and providing play-based problem-solving activities for children can improve outcomes for children and families.
- Comprehensive, community-based parent support programs can have positive, long-term effects on child development.
- The earlier supports and services are offered to families, the more significant the short- and long-term benefits.

**The research findings summarized here are drawn from a number of sources.**

See page 47 for a selected list of research sources.

\* Arthur Reynolds et al., “Long-Term Effects of an Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Achievement and Juvenile Arrest,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2001), 285(18): 2339–2346. As cited in *Guidelines for Family Support Practice*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Family Support America, 2001), p. v.

† Margaret Norrie McCain and J. Fraser Mustard, *Reversing the Real Brain Drain: The Early Years Study Final Report* (Toronto: Children’s Secretariat of Ontario, 1999).

Current research shows that many parents don't have the skills they need to give their children the best possible start. It also shows a lack of parenting skills across all levels of society, regardless of parents' income, education or occupation.

In 2002, Canada's Invest in Kids Foundation published the results of a national survey\* of parents with young children. The results indicate much room for improvement in the art of parenting:

- On a twelve-question test of parenting knowledge, fewer than half of parents were knowledgeable about providing their children with stimulating environments.
- Only 14% of parents reported confidence in their knowledge of signs to look for in determining if their children's physical, emotional, social or intellectual development was appropriate for their age.
- Only 44% of parents reported confidence about their parenting skills and their ability to understand their children's feelings and needs.
- Only 64% of parents reported frequent positive interactions with their children.
- 58% did not feel supported in their role as parents.

#### Note

The results for Alberta parents who participated in the survey followed the same pattern as the findings for the rest of Canada.

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\* Lynn Oldershaw, *A National Survey of Parents of Young Children* [online], April 2000 [cited July 9, 2004] (Invest in Kids, 2002), <[www.investinkids.ca/content/documents/parent\\_poll\\_10\\_29\\_02.pdf](http://www.investinkids.ca/content/documents/parent_poll_10_29_02.pdf)>.

## Parent Links: A Practical Solution

“Finding ways to support and affirm parental responsibility for the optimal development of children” is an ongoing challenge.\* Accessible, well-staffed Parent Link resource centres offer a practical solution.

Parent Link centres are **centres of excellence** that comply with province-wide operational and programming standards. Establishing a network of Parent Link centres gives Alberta parents access to comprehensive, high-quality, publicly accountable, community-based programs, services and supports. A provincial framework ensures that all parents have access to similar types of services and the same standards of excellence. It also capitalizes on a number of opportunities identified in the 2003 environmental scan (see p. 10):

- Long-established partnerships—with community agencies and with other ministries—are already in place to support the Parent Link program.
- Successful, effective family support programs already exist a number of communities. The Parent Link program can build on this success.
- Parent Link centres can improve the coordination of services to families and provide a foundation on which other family support services are built.

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\* *Children's Services Business Plan 2004–07* [online PDF file, p. 122], March 24, 2004 [cited July 4, 2004],  
<[www.finance.gov.ab.ca/publications/budget/budget2004/child.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.ab.ca/publications/budget/budget2004/child.pdf)>.

## Parent Link Centres

### A Working Definition

Parent Link centres meet the criteria for family resource programs as defined by the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs:

*Family resource programs, firmly rooted in their communities... provide a spectrum of early support and prevention services for families with children...[They] also serve as non-threatening access points to more specialized services in the community.*

—*Parenting and Family Supports: Moving Beyond the Rhetoric Together* [online], July 2001 [cited July 4, 2004]  
(Ottawa: Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs),  
<[www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF](http://www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF)>.

### Objectives and Expected Results

The purpose of the Parent Link program is

- **to support Alberta's parents** in their role as their children's first and most influential teachers
- **to link Alberta's parenting programs and services through a province-wide network** that
  - promotes excellence
  - facilitates the sharing of resources, knowledge and best practices
  - fosters the creation of partnerships
  - encourages cooperation on projects of value to the network as a whole, as well as to individual members

Expected results include

- an increase in the number of children and families who do not require family enhancement services from child protection agencies
- an increase in the number of children whose special needs are identified and who are referred to appropriate services
- an increase in the number of Aboriginal children and parents who participate in quality early learning activities
- an increase in the overall number of children and parents who participate in Parent Link programs
- an increase in the number of parents who report improved parenting skills and knowledge of child development

## **Mandate**

Parent Link centres provide high-quality, comprehensive, accessible, community-based programs that comply with province-wide standards of excellence and respond to the changing needs of parents and families. In fulfilling this mandate, the centres

- promote family wellness
- promote positive parent–child relationships
- improve parenting knowledge and skills
- foster optimal child development
- ensure that children get a healthy start in life

## Core Services

Parent Link centres provide a comprehensive range of services that includes **all** the following core services:

- parent education
- early childhood development and care
- family support
- information and referrals

These services are both parent oriented and child oriented. They are offered as stand-alone services or in partnership with other community agencies. For example, a Parent Link centre might offer an early literacy development program in conjunction with a local school or library, or refer a family to a community's home visitation program, or work with a public health centre to offer classes on child safety or nutrition.

### Note

**To be considered a Parent Link centre and to be eligible for Parent Link program funding, an organization must provide all four of the above-listed core services**—either independently or through partnerships with other community agencies. The specific programs that a Parent Link centre offers within each core service area are driven by community needs and delivered in a manner that respects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the community.

Parent Links centres must operate in accordance with the program's guiding principles (see p. 20) and comply with provincial evaluation requirements (see p. 44) and other program guidelines and best practices, as specified in Chapter 6.

## Parent Education

Parent education programs help “to build parents’ skills and confidence in providing a nurturing environment for their children.”\* They address the needs of all types of parents, regardless of family structure, composition or socio-economic background. For example, a comprehensive parent education program would address the parenting concerns of fathers as well as mothers, first-time parents as well as grandparents, caregivers and foster parents as well as birth parents, and so forth.

Examples of parent education programs include

- formal and informal workshops and seminars on issues related to parenting and early childhood development
- drop-in seminars and programs for parents and caregivers
- family literacy and numeracy programs for parents and caregivers

## Early Childhood Development and Care

“Parent–child relationships are enhanced when families have positive experiences working or playing together.”† Providing children with a range of interactive, play-based problem-solving experiences can help develop their readiness to learn and ensure they start school “equipped for success.”

Examples of early childhood development and care programs include

- play-based learning activities in which parents and children interact
- the *Roots of Empathy* program, which develops children’s empathy as a means of building caring, peaceful and civil societies
- play group programs in which children can explore art, physical recreation and other activities

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\* Family Support America, *Guidelines for Family Support Practice*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Family Support America, 2001), p. 4.

† Ibid., p. 86.

- early literacy programs in which parents and their toddlers learn to enjoy rhymes, finger plays, songs and simple movement games
- preschool programs that promote literacy and numeracy skills and develop the competencies children need to do well at school

### **Family Support**

Family support services are intended to be preventive measures designed “to help parents identify and develop their strengths...and be active, involved, concerned directors of their families’ lives and their children’s development.”\* Family support services may include a range of social, educational and recreational programs and activities, including

- collective kitchens
- toy– or equipment–lending libraries
- home visiting services (in partnership with Alberta’s home visitation programs)
- family counselling services (provided on-site or through referrals to other community agencies)
- formal as well as unstructured opportunities for parents to meet other parents and share their experiences, build new friendships and create informal networks of support

### **Information and Referrals**

Parent Link centres provide an information portal that connects parents with programs, tools and resources that can help them raise strong, healthy, well-adjusted children. Specific services may include

- resource libraries (stand-alone or in partnership with community libraries) that include books and videos about parenting and child development, as well as books that parents can read with their children

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\* Family Support America, *Guidelines for Family Support Practice*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Family Support America, 2001), p. 4.

- registries of child care providers
- resource lists that provide details about the range of family services available in the community
- referrals to community programs and services
  - For example, Parent Link staff may refer families to home visiting programs that can help them define and achieve their parenting goals.
- on-site developmental screening for children, or referrals to community agencies that provide this service

## Guiding Principles

*The following principles provide a foundation for Alberta's Parent Link centres. These principles reflect generally accepted principles of family support, including those endorsed by the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada) and Family Support America.*

**Children come first**—in all Parent Link program services and activities. The best interests of each child drive all program-related decisions.

**Parents are the primary caregivers of their children.** Programs offered through Parent Link centres recognize that supporting parents is key to fostering optimal child development.

**Parenting is a lifelong learning experience.** All families have resources and strengths that they bring to this experience.

**Parents and communities are active partners** in the planning, design and delivery of Parent Link programs and services. Parents are involved as volunteers, advisors, facilitators, planners and evaluators as well as recipients of Parent Link services.

**Parent Link centres are open to all parents,** no matter where they live and regardless of their social, cultural or economic background. They offer affordable services and support at times that are convenient for parents.

**Parent Link centres recognize that parents need different types of support** at different stages in their children's lives.

**Parent Link centres value diversity and promote inclusion.** They recognize and respect the fact that families differ in their structure and composition. They recognize that different families have different needs, and that special services may be required for children with special needs.

**Parent Link centres are community-based partnerships.** They build networks and partnerships with governments and community agencies in order to provide a comprehensive range of services that meet the needs of children and families.


**Parent Link centres are flexible.** They respond to the changing needs and circumstances of parents and communities, while still complying with provincial standards and guidelines. As a result, different programs and services may be offered in different communities or to different parents.

**Parent Link centres recognize that communities play an important role in supporting parents** and providing children with the positive, supportive environment they need to fulfill their potential. They foster a sense of belonging and help families connect with their communities.

**Parent Link centres deliver high-quality programs that reflect current, evidence-based research findings and best practices.**

**Parent Link centres use a proactive, preventive approach.** Rather than focusing on problem-specific crisis intervention, they help parents build skills and abilities that empower them to solve problems, achieve goals and take control of their lives.

**Parent Link centres are accountable.** Ongoing monitoring and evaluation ensure public accountability and foster continuous improvement.



## Who Uses Parent Links?

Parent Link centres serve all parents and caregivers who need support, information, training, counselling or programs to improve their parenting skills and provide Alberta's children with a good start in life.

Since the early years of a child's life are the foundation for later development, most program participants are families with children under six. In response to local community needs and available resources, Parent Link centres also provide programs for teens and for parents of older children.

Most programs and services provided by Parent Link centres are available at no cost to participants. In some situations, nominal fees may apply. In these cases, the fees are waived or subsidies provided for parents and families who can't afford to pay.

Parent Link centres recognize that all parents bring strengths, talents and resources that can enrich the centres' programs for all participants. Parent Links build on the resources of parents in all aspects of their programming.

## Planning and Development

Good planning and community input are critical if Parent Link centres are to succeed in meeting the needs of Alberta's children, parents and communities. Good planning is a flexible process: it includes ongoing analysis and evaluation to facilitate problem solving and unexpected but necessary changes of course.

### The Planning Process At a Glance

- Alberta's Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) convene a community-based planning table to implement Parent Link centres in their region.
- The planning table in each region develops proposals and plans to establish Parent Link centres that meet community needs. Each regional plan identifies the organizations that will serve as Parent Link centres and receive Parent Link program funding.
- Community-based regional plans are submitted to the Minister's Advisory Committee for review. The committee makes recommendations for the Minister's approval.
- Funding is allocated for approved plans.

### Community Planning Tables

As a first step in establishing Parent Link centres, regional Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) convene a planning partnership that represents their community. The core of the partnership must include

- at least one representative from the Child and Family Services Authority
- Family and Community Support Services partners
- representation from the Regional Health Authority
- representation from regional school jurisdictions

- parent input
  - Parent input into the planning process can come in many forms, including some or all of the following:
    - data from existing parenting reports or studies
    - focus groups
    - parent participation at the planning table

The planning table may also invite other members, including

- representatives from both large and small organizations that provide services to families with young children
- representatives from existing organizations that serve parent and families in the region
- representatives from the Aboriginal community
- representatives from the region’s library sector
- representatives from the United Way or appropriate service clubs and community-based foundations

#### **Planning Partnerships**

Communities are encouraged to use the existing planning tables in their regions as the basis of the planning partnership. Additional members can be added to these tables as required.

Examples of existing planning tables include

- the **ECD planning table**, which was established to plan and coordinate the expansion or enhancement of early childhood services across the province
- **Community Partnership Enhancement Fund tables**, which are a partnership between Family and Community Support Services and CFSA

Members of the community planning table must have input and influence over decisions about how planning, implementation, quality assurance and training dollars are allocated within their region. They must also have the authority to make decisions on behalf of their sector or organization.

The planning table as a whole must have the authority to make decisions and allocate resources on behalf of the region. The planning process in each region must be fair, transparent and flexible.

## Developing the Plan

Plans and proposals to establish Parent Link centres are developed by the community planning table convened in each region of the province. Community plans can be based on any of the following models:

- expanding an existing program
  - When an organization already provides all four of the required core services, Parent Link program funding could make it possible for the organization to
    - extend its hours of operation and improve accessibility for working parents
    - provide resources for the parents of children with special needs
    - provide services to specific ethnocultural groups
    - provide services to families in the surrounding community
    - expand its program in other ways
- transforming an existing program
  - When an organization provides some of the four required core services, Parent Link program funding can be used to expand current services in accordance with program guidelines.
- creating a new centre
  - Proposals to establish new Parent Link centres must respond to community needs, have the endorsement of the region's community planning table and meet the requirements of the Parent Link program. Except for minor renovations, capital costs are not eligible for program funding in Phase 1.
- creating a new delivery partnership
  - Different organizations in a particular region may specialize in meeting particular community needs. Collectively, these organizations may provide all four of the required core services.

### Parent Link Core Services

- parent education
- early childhood development and care
- family support
- information and referrals

See p. 17 for details.

Creating a service delivery partnership linked by a centralized administrative structure would allow the organizations to qualify for Parent Link program funding—even though the organizations were not situated in one location and no one organization provided a comprehensive range of services.

### **Components of the Plan**

Plans for Parent Link centres must use the standard template developed by Alberta Children’s Services. In each submitted plan, the community planning table must identify

- the region’s priorities for family support and child development services
- gaps or duplication of family support and child development services in the region
- how Parent Link centres will build on existing programs and services
- what steps are needed for the successful implementation of Parent Link centres in the region

Community plans for Parent Link centres must also provide the following information:\*

- where the centres will be located
- the operational model that will be used and contact information, as appropriate
- the population the centres will serve
- the number of participants expected to use each of the centres’ four core services (See p. 17 for details.)
- how the centres will address gaps or duplication of services

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\* The following steps are modelled on the planning requirements for Ontario’s Early Years Centres. See *Planning the Ontario Early Years Centres: Guidelines for Communities* (Ministry of Community and Social Services, September 2001), p. 17.

- how the centres will coordinate their services with other those of other family support service providers in the community
- how parents will be involved in centre operations
- how the centres will deliver core services and other programs, how they will meet the needs of particular population segments, how they will market and communicate their services and how they will meet the diverse needs of the community's various ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups
- how the centres will share ideas, experiences and best practices with other Parent Link service providers within the region and across Alberta
- an annual operating and capital budget (Note: Only minor renovations are eligible as capital costs in Phase 1.)

## Program Delivery

Parent Links centres deliver services under contract to the Ministry of Children's Services.

## Funding

Alberta Children's Services currently spends approximately \$5 million on parent or family resource programs in communities across the province. This funding is allocated through regional Child and Family Service Authorities and Family and Community Support Services partners.

In 2004–2005, under the Parent Link program, Alberta Children's Services will provide \$6 million—in addition to the \$5 million currently allocated—to establish Parent Link centres in communities across the province. The additional funding will ensure that the centres can

- deliver the four core services (see p. 17) in accordance with Parent Link guiding principles and standards
- pay their staff well enough to maintain a stable, qualified workforce

Family Support America suggests that the cost of establishing one or more linked centres can range from US \$100,00 to \$350,000 and the process can take about 12 months.

—Family Support America, *Guidelines for Family Support Practice*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Family Support America, 2001), p. 18.

- provide outreach services in the community
- develop and maintain high-quality programs

**Note**

Parent Links program funding is allocated for organizations identified in approved regional plans submitted by community planning tables. (See p. 23 for details.)

**Funding Criteria**

The following criteria govern the allocation and use of Parent Link program funding.

**Parent Link program funding is used to improve existing programs and services or to create new parent resource centres** throughout the province.

It is not intended as a replacement for current funding: parent resource programs that received funding from other sources should continue to receive those dollars *in addition* to funding provided through the Parent Link program.

**The allocation of Parent Link program funding is based on a centre's development and funding needs.** For example, an established centre that was looking to expand existing programs and was receiving core funding from other sources would be eligible for less funding than a new centre facing program development costs.

**Parent Link funding cannot be used to cover the operating costs of licensed child care providers.**

**Parent Link centres may charge nominal fees** for programs as long as these fees do not create barriers to access. Subsidies or fee waivers must be made available to parents who cannot afford to pay program fees.

**The Parent Link program does not fund capital investments.** In the first year of the program, capital funding is limited to minor renovations and is subject to the approval of the community planning table (see p. 23) and the Minister's Advisory Committee.

## The Implementation Plan

***The approach and work plan described in this chapter are subject to change.***

*Parent Link resource centres are identified in Alberta Children's Services' 2004–2007 business plan and funding for Phase 1 is committed in the Ministry's 2004–2005 budget. Funding for subsequent phases will be approved annually, as the Ministry's annual budget and business plan are approved.*

*Communities are encouraged to develop three-year plans for Parent Link centres. However, funding allocations for Phases 2 and 3 are contingent on dollars being available in the Ministry's annual budget.*

### The Approach

**A phased approach is being used** to implement the proposed network of Parent Link centres across the province:

- In Phase 1 of the program, funding is allocated to community-based planning tables (see p. 23), which develop a proposal for at least one Parent Link centre in each CFSA region. This funding is earmarked for expanding or improving existing programs.
- Between 2005 and 2007, additional Parent Link centres are launched each year.
- By April 2007, Alberta has a network of up to 44 Parent Link centres. All the centres operate in accordance with provincial standards and guidelines. And all parents have access to the support and services they need.

A phased approach to implementation provides the flexibility to incorporate new ideas and best practices. It allows for course adjustments to be made in response to changing circumstances and needs. It also provides a framework for continuous improvement.

### **A Solid Foundation**

Each phase of the Parent Link program is characterized by community-based consultation, planning, evaluation and review. The following principles provide the foundation for planning and implementation:

1. Community leadership and partnerships are critical to the success of early childhood development and parenting programs.
2. New parenting and early childhood development programs build on what is already working.
3. Creating excellence is a priority.

***Community input is critical.** Parent Link centres cannot succeed unless they meet the needs of their communities and the needs of the parents and children they are intended to serve.*

## **Program Phases**

### **Research and Planning, 2003–2004**

#### **Highlights**

- Creation of a cross-ministry committee—with representatives from Alberta Learning, Health and Wellness and Children’s Services—to provide input into the development of the initiative.
- Environmental scan and survey of parent resource programs in the province.
- Research to identify the most appropriate program models and best practices.
- Drafting of preliminary standards and guidelines.

## Phase 1, 2004–2005

### Highlights

Four organizations are identified as “early leaders”—exemplars of the Parent Link approach. These organizations are early leaders because they already offer all four core services required of Parent Link centres or use an innovative, partnership-based approach to service delivery.

Regional plans for the establishment of a network of Parent Link centres are developed by community-based planning tables in each of the 10 CFSA regions of the province. (See p. 23 for details.)

Communities are encouraged to use their regions’ existing planning tables as the basis of the Parent Links planning partnership.

At least one Parent Link centre is established in each CFSA region. In addition, two centres for urban Aboriginals are established in partnership with Alberta’s Aboriginal community. With the launch of these 12 centres plus the four early leaders, Alberta has 16 Parent Link centres across the province.

#### Early Leaders

- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- Red Deer Family Services
- Strathcona County Family and Community Support Services
- Awo Taan Native Women’s Shelter

### Timeline

- July 2004
  - Alberta’s Minister of Children’s Services
    - announces the Parent Link program
    - appoints the Minister’s Advisory Committee for Parent Link Centres
    - identifies four organizations as “early leaders” that exemplify the Parent Link approach (These centres receive Parent Link program funding to expand or improve their services.)
- August 30 – October 4, 2004
  - Each regional Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) convenes a **community planning table** that includes Family and Community Support Services partners and representatives from the Regional Health Authority and regional school jurisdictions. (See p. 23 for details.)

- The planning partnership prepares a plan to establish Parents Link centres in its region. (See p. 25 for details.)
- October 15, 2004
- Regional plans are submitted for review by the Minister's Advisory Committee.
  - The advisory committee reviews the plans and makes recommendations to the Minister of Children's Services.
- by Oct. 31, 2004
- Regional proposals are implemented. The Ministry signs contracts with service providers who will develop and manage the proposed centres.
  - Sixteen Parent Link centres are operational across the province.
- by March 31, 2005
- A performance evaluation framework is defined and appropriate measures identified.

## **Phase 2, 2005–2006**

### **Highlights**

The Parent Links network grows to include up to 30 centres, up to 14 of which are new.

### **Timeline**

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| March – April<br>2005 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regional plans and proposals are reviewed by the Minister’s Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations to the Minister of Children’s Services.</li></ul>   |
| April – May<br>2005   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding is allocated for distribution to Parent Link centres that have been identified in community-based regional plans.</li><li>• The Ministry signs contracts with service providers who will develop and manage the approved Parent Link centres.</li></ul> |
| April 2005            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding is continued to Parent Link centres that were operational in 2003–2004, assuming their contractual obligations were adequately met.</li><li>• New Parent Link centres (approved in the winter of 2005) are launched.</li></ul>                          |

### **Phase 3, 2006–2007**

#### **Highlights**

The Parent Link network grows to include up to 44 centres, up to 14 of which are new.

#### **Timeline**

- Parent Link centres, in partnership with the Ministry, define, refine and endorse province-wide operational standards, including standards for
  - accreditation
  - staffing and operations
  - planning and development
  - evaluation
  - quality assurance

#### **Note**

The guidelines and best practices outlined in Chapter 6 are first steps toward the establishment of comprehensive, province-wide standards for Parent Link centres. Drawing on the collective experience accumulated by the Parent Link network, the guidelines will be expanded and fine tuned based on lessons learned in each phase of the program.

### **Post-Implementation, 2007–**

#### **Highlights**

Parents and children across Alberta are served by accredited, accountable Parent Link centres that meet province-wide operating standards.

#### **Timeline**

- Province-wide accreditation and operating standards are implemented.



## Program Guidelines and Best Practices

The guidelines and best practices outlined in this chapter are first steps toward the establishment of comprehensive, province-wide standards to ensure that all Albertans have access to high-quality parent resource programs. The guidelines will be expanded and fine tuned based on lessons learned in each phase of the program.

**The current guidelines establish minimum expectations** with regard to the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of Parent Link centres. They also suggest best practices that service providers can incorporate in their long-term plans and in day-to-day work.

### Note

The objectives, principles and requirements outlined in Chapter 4 underpin all standards and requirements for Alberta's Parent Link centres.

### Community Connections

Alberta's Parent Link centres are part of a range of community-based services and supports designed to strengthen families, improve parenting skills and foster optimal child development.

**To serve families as effectively as possible, the centres must be closely connected to their communities.** Centre staff must be active participants in community-based local planning groups. They must build networks and partnerships with schools and community agencies that provide child protection, family literacy, school readiness, housing assistance, job training, public health,

primary health care and other family services. They must also build partnerships with the parents and families who use Parent Link services.

Community partnerships help ensure that

- centre staff are knowledgeable about community resources and can refer families to the appropriate agencies
- staff of other agencies know about the Parent Link program and can refer families who would benefit from using Parent Link services
- program resources are used effectively and efforts are not duplicated across agencies
- families get the services they need through a coordinated, integrated, community-based approach
- parents and families have a voice in the centres' planning and decision-making processes
- Parent Link centres benefit from the talents and resources parents can offer as volunteers, advisors, facilitators, planners and evaluators of centre services

### **Best Practices**

Parent Link centres participate in partnership-based community planning tables that serve families and children.

Parent Link programs build and develop informal support networks.

Parent Link program staff are knowledgeable about community resources.

Parent Links involve parents as valued partners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the centres' programs and services. They encourage and support the involvement of parents in the planning of other community-based programs for families and children.

Parent Link centres develop and implement volunteer-management strategies designed to involve parents who are willing to volunteer their services. They identify community volunteers who are willing to work with parents and children within Parent Links programs.

## Service Delivery Partnerships

*Service integration increases a community's capacity to provide the services and supports that families need, when and where they need them. It tries to overcome barriers that separate formal and informal systems and restrict access to services. In a well-integrated system of services, families can access a range of supports easily and seamlessly.*

—Community Supports and the Early Childhood Development Initiative  
[position paper] (Ottawa: Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, January 2002), p. 4.

Parent Link centres are portals through which families can access other programs and services in the community. The centres provide families with information about these programs and services. They help families “make contact” by providing referrals, scheduling appointments or putting them in touch with other parents or with staff and programs offered by other agencies.

To coordinate service delivery, communities develop service agreements between Parent Link centres and agencies that provide family support and early childhood development services. Service agreements should outline

- the services each organization will provide
- the referral process
- reporting requirements
- how participant information will be managed
- mechanisms for conflict resolution

## Best Practices

Parent Link centres work in partnership with other agencies to develop agreements for coordinating service delivery in the community. This gives families easy access to a range of services and supports.

Centre staff participate in community networks to ensure they remain knowledgeable about community resources and to develop appropriate referral systems.

Parent Link centres have up-to-date information about community programs and services available to families.

Centre staff provide information and referrals to formal and informal services and supports available in the community. They refer parents and families to community programs they can use in conjunction with those available at Parent Link centres.

Parent Link centres use one of the two recommended tools to provide on-site developmental screening for children. Alternatively, they make referrals to community agencies that provide this service.

Centre staff track and report all program referrals to the Ministry.

### **Recommended Developmental Screens**

The **Nipissing District Development Screen** covers vision, hearing, speech and language, as well as motor, social and self-help skills for children aged one month to six years.

The **Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)**, for children aged four to 60 months, assesses five developmental areas: communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem solving and personal/social skills.

Both of the recommended tools are easily administered by parents or paraprofessionals.

## Communication and Outreach

Parent Link centres must build public awareness about the importance of giving children a good start in life. Building awareness includes

- marketing and promoting the programs and services they offer to parents and children
- maintaining regular communication with current and prospective participants
- maintaining communication between program staff, between staff and participants, and between Parent Links and the community at large
- fostering inter-centre and inter-region communication

### Best Practices

Parent Link centres celebrate and appreciate program participants through special events such as volunteer-recognition ceremonies or social activities.

Parent Link centres use a variety of strategies to build public awareness and keep current and prospective participants informed about centre activities.

- Reach strategies may use brochures, posters, bulletin boards, public service announcements, paid advertising and the Internet.

Parent Link centres work closely with schools to ensure that program information is available to schoolchildren and their parents, and to provide seamless, coordinated service delivery.

Parent Link centres ensure that parents have access to up-to-date information about centre programs and resources. They produce and distribute a monthly newsletter for parents.

Parent Link centres develop specialized outreach strategies to engage parents and children whose circumstances create barriers to their participation in centre programs and activities.

Parent Link centres encourage parents to provide formal and informal feedback about the effectiveness of programs and services.

## Programs and Services

Parent Link centres provide a range of programs to meet the needs of parents, families, caregivers and children in their community.

Parent Link programs provide opportunities for parents and children to enjoy time together and engage in interactive play-based learning activities. They also provide opportunities for parents to interact with other parents, share one another's cultures and experiences, enjoy good fellowship and make new friends.

## Best Practices

Parent Link centres offer a comprehensive range of high-quality, formal and informal programs that meet the diverse needs of families and communities. (See p. 17 for details about the core services approved centres are expected to provide.)

The scheduling of Parent Link programs meets the needs of working parents as well as those who stay at home with their children. Services are available in the evenings and on weekends as well as during the day.

Services for parents and caregivers include

- education programs and access to a variety of resources that can help them learn about child development and parenting
- opportunities to develop peer-to-peer relationships
- opportunities to work, play and have fun with their children
- formal and informal sessions that facilitate adult interaction and reflect the interests of participants

Services related to early childhood development and care provide opportunities for parent–child interaction as well as child-only participation. They include developmentally appropriate play areas designed to

- allow children to make choices
- encourage cooperation and social interaction
- capitalize on children’s strengths

Parent Link centres involve parents as partners in the planning and delivery of programs and services.

Parent Link centres embrace a philosophy of continuous improvement and strive to create programs of excellence.

## Staffing and Training

Staff who work at Parent Link centres have the skills and competencies needed to support families and foster optimal child development. They are capable of developing trusting relationships with all types of families. They understand and respect the cultural diversity of the communities they serve and are representative of these communities.

### Best Practices

In accordance with relevant legislation, Parent Link centres employ fair practices for staff recruitment and advancement. They provide their staff with interdisciplinary training and professional development opportunities to expand their knowledge and keep them abreast of the latest research.

The staff of Parent Link centres have a human services diploma and/or appropriate life experiences and personal characteristics.

Parent Link staff understand both the theory and practice of family support service delivery and early childhood development.

Parent Link staff model appropriate interaction with children. The staff–participant ratio is small enough to allow one-to-one interaction between staff and the children and parents who use the services of Parent Link centres.

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**Staff Competencies**

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The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs suggests that the staff of parent resource centres should have “a good understanding about early childhood development, parenting, adult education, family systems, community development, ecological perspectives, family literacy, group facilitation, nutrition, volunteer management, counselling, community resources, cultural awareness, family violence, child abuse and neglect, managing not-for-profits, research methods, proposal writing [and] evaluation.”

—*Parenting and Family Supports: Moving Beyond the Rhetoric Together* [online], July 2001 [cited July 4, 2004] (Ottawa: Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs), p. 4, <[www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF](http://www.frp.ca/PDFDocuments/positionpaper2001.PDF)>.

## Facilities

Providing relevant, accessible programs in a friendly, comfortable environment is an important aspect of the Parent Link approach.

### Best Practices

Parent Link centres are easily accessible, warm, welcoming places where parents and children feel comfortable and secure.

The decor of each centre reflects the community and parents it serves.

Parent Link centres comply with relevant regulatory requirements for health and safety.

Parent Link centres have appropriate space to deliver their four core services: parent education, early childhood development and care, family support, and information and referrals. This space includes

- a welcoming reception area
- spaces for parents to gather together informally
- group meeting space
- private space for confidential meetings
- play/activity areas
- adequate space for staff

## Evaluation and Performance Measurement

Alberta Children's Services and its delivery partners are committed to maintaining the quality of family support and early childhood development services in the province. Quality assurance serves a number of purposes:

- It fosters learning and continual improvement in the ways communities and agencies work with families.
- It contributes to the body of knowledge about what works in early intervention programs.
- It ensures accountability for funding.

### Best Practices

Parent Link centres work with parents and with the Ministry to develop an appropriate quality assurance system for the Parent Link program. The system includes at least two components:

- record-keeping and reporting
- program monitoring, including performance measurement and program evaluation

Parent Link service providers **monitor and report**

- service use data, in accordance with recognized best practices
- performance results, as outlined in their contracts with the Ministry
- participant satisfaction (informally as well as through formal participant satisfaction surveys)

Parent Link Centres **protect the confidentiality** of participants in accordance with all contractual and legislative requirements.

## Program Monitoring

Responsibility for program monitoring is shared by Alberta Children's Services, service providers and the community planning tables established with regard to Parent Link centres. (See p. 23 for details.) Monitoring activities include

- ensuring that local practices are consistent with provincial policies and recognized best practices
- identifying and addressing issues and concerns with regard to provincial policies and best practices
- collecting the information needed to make ongoing program adjustments
- reviewing regional and provincial performance indicators

There are two components to program monitoring: performance measurement and program evaluation.

**Performance measurement** is an ongoing process tied to overall contract management. It compares the funds invested in a program (inputs) to short-term program results (outputs). This information helps Alberta Children's Services and contracted service providers assess the impact of the program and identify areas for improvement.

**Program evaluation** is a systematic process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information about the implementation, effectiveness and efficiency of a program. Evaluation is closely linked to performance measurement, although it is typically conducted periodically rather than as an ongoing function of an organization. Data collected through performance measurement provides the basis for evaluations to assess the impact and success of a program.

Program evaluation is conducted at the program level, regionally and provincially:

- At the program level, service providers allocate resources to evaluate Parent Link centres and services.
- At the provincial level, program evaluation is carried out in partnership with Parent Link centres and other Ministry partners.

## Best Practices

Parent input is an important component of the evaluation process.

Parent Link centres designate a portion of their program budget for monitoring and evaluation.

Centre staff work with the Ministry and with their community-based planning table to develop appropriate local, regional and provincial performance indicators for the Parent Link program.

Indicators may include

- an increase in the number of children and families who do not require family enhancement services from child protection agencies
- an increase in the number of children whose special needs are identified and who are referred to appropriate services
- an increase in the number of Aboriginal children and parents who participate in quality early learning activities
- an increase in the overall number of children and parents who participate in Parent Link programs
- an increase in the number of parents who report improved parenting skills and knowledge of child development

## Roles and Responsibilities

The success of a parent resource program depends on the cooperation of many partners, each of whom plays a specific role. The roles and responsibilities of each partner are summarized in the following section. These roles will continue to evolve as the Parent Link network develops and grows.

### Alberta Children’s Services

Under Alberta law, the provincial government is accountable for services provided for the safety, security and well-being of children and families.

Alberta’s Ministry of Children’s Services is responsible for

- setting provincial objectives and strategic direction for the provision of child and family services, including Parent Link centres
- establishing provincial policies and standards for Parent Link centres
- allocating funding and other resources
- establishing a provincial evaluation framework for Parent Link centres

### Minister’s Advisory Committee on Parent Link Centres

The advisory committee is responsible for

- reviewing and approving the proposed program guidelines
- reviewing the regional, capital funding budgets and community-based plans to establish Parent Link centres across the province
- advising the Minister and providing recommendations about the approval of plans
- serving as advisors for the implementation of the Parent Link program

- facilitating the flow of information between the Minister, the Ministry and community agencies who are stakeholders in the program

### Child and Family Services Authorities

Child and Family Services Authorities act on behalf of the Minister of Children's Services. Their responsibilities include

- promoting the safety, security and well-being of children, families and other members of the community
- setting regional objectives and strategic direction for the provision of child and family services
- working with other authorities, the government and other public and private bodies to coordinate the provision of child and family services
- ensuring reasonable access to quality child and family services

**With respect to the Parent Link program, regional CFSA's are responsible for** convening a community planning table to develop a network of Parent Link centres across the province (For details about the planning process, see p. 23.)

### The Community Planning Table

The community planning table convened in each CFSA region of the province is responsible for

- coordinating and participating in a fair, inclusive, transparent and effective planning and evaluation process for regional Parent Link centres
- coordinating the submission of community-based Parent Link plans that best represent the interests and needs of the region and give families and children the benefit of comprehensive, coordinated services
- ensuring that parents have meaningful role as partners in the planning, delivery and evaluation of Parent Link centres
- serving as advocates for the communities in their region and ensuring that community needs are clearly articulated in the regional Parent Link plan

## Parent Link Centres

Organizations that manage Parent Link centres are expected to

- carry out the terms and conditions of their contracts with the Ministry of Children's Services
- provide programs that comply with the Ministry's guidelines, policies and accountability requirements
- comply with legislative requirements
- participate in community planning tables to ensure that families and children have the benefit of comprehensive, coordinated services
- recruit, train and supervise staff
- maintain program records
- monitor and report program progress and results
- ensure their programs are based on current best practices and evidence-based research
- evaluate performance using formal and informal measures of participant satisfaction and other appropriate methods
- participate in the provincial evaluation process and allocate appropriate funding for monitoring and evaluation

## Parents Who Use Parent Link Centres

Parents are encouraged to take an active role in the planning, delivery and evaluation of centre programs and services. They are encouraged to share their experiences with other parents. Their contribution as program advisors and volunteers is welcomed and valued.



## Resources

### **Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs**

<[www.frp.ca](http://www.frp.ca)>

The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada) is dedicated to the advancement of social policy, research, resource development and training for organizations and individuals who enhance the capacity of families to raise their children.

FRP Canada’s definition of family support programs is widely accepted, as are its 12 guiding principles of family support.

### **Family Support America**

<[www.familysupportamerica.org](http://www.familysupportamerica.org)>

Family Support America is recognized worldwide as a pioneer in the family support movement. Its “bedrock belief” is that “if you want to help families, ask parents what they want.” The association’s 292-page *Guidelines for Family Support Practice* (revised second edition, 2002) is an invaluable resource for family support service providers.

### **Invest in Kids Foundation**

<[www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca)>

<[www.investinkids.ca/content/documents/parent\\_poll\\_10\\_29\\_02.pdf](http://www.investinkids.ca/content/documents/parent_poll_10_29_02.pdf)>

Invest in Kids is a national not-for-profit organization whose goal is to help families make the most of their children’s first five years. The Invest in Kids website contains a wealth of information for parents and family support service providers, including the complete report on the foundation’s 1999 survey of Canadian parents.

**Ontario Children's Secretariat**

<[www.childsec.gov.on.ca](http://www.childsec.gov.on.ca)>

The secretariat funded Margaret Norrie McCain and J. Fraser Mustard's landmark study, *Reversing the Real Brain Drain: Early Years Study Final Report* (April 1999).

The full report is available as a PDF file which can be downloaded from the World Bank website:

<[www.worldbank.org/children/Early%20Years%20Study%20Englihs.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/children/Early%20Years%20Study%20Englihs.pdf)>

**Founders' Network of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIAR)**

<[wwwFOUNDERS.NET](http://wwwFOUNDERS.NET)>

The Founders' Network funded Margaret Norrie McCain and J. Fraser Mustard's *The Early Years Study Three Years Later*—a report on the Government of Ontario's response to recommendations made in the 1999 *Early Years Study*.

**Ontario-Based Family Support Programs**

*Planning the Ontario Early Years Centres: Guidelines for Communities* (Ministry of Community and Social Services, September 2001).

*Operating Criteria for Family Resource Programs* [draft] (Toronto Children's Services, May 2002).

*Toronto Report Card on Children*, Volume 5, Update 2003 (Toronto: Children and Youth Advocate, 2003).

**Roots of Empathy**

<[www.rootsofempathy.org](http://www.rootsofempathy.org)>

Founded and headed by Mary Gordon, Roots of Empathy is a Toronto-based not-for-profit organization dedicated to the development of empathy as a means of building caring, peaceful and civil societies. The organization delivers a parenting education program to elementary school students: each month, a parent and infant from the school neighbourhood make a classroom visit.

**Ryerson University**

[www.ryerson.ca/voices/resources.htm](http://www.ryerson.ca/voices/resources.htm)

Ryerson University and the Metro Association for Family Resource Programmes have undertaken a two-year national study—FRP Participants’ Voices—designed to create an evaluation tool based on what users say is valuable about Canada’s family resource programs. When the study is completed, service providers across the country will have access to an innovative evaluation framework and a set of indicators for documenting program outcomes and effective practices.



## **Parent Links**

*A network of resource centres serving parents,  
caregivers and children in Alberta*

### **For more information or for additional copies of this document, contact**

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