

SUMMARY

Benefits and Effectiveness of Community-based Collaborative Early Childhood Development (ECD) Interventions

August 13, 2014

Prepared for the Trail Area Health and Environment Committee (THEC)

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SUMMARY: Benefits and Effectiveness of Community-based Collaborative ECD Interventions

Community-based collaborative interventions involve partnerships between early childhood organizations, practitioners, government (municipalities, regional districts, provincial), parent groups, researchers, etc., in delivering programs to children, parents, and families.

With respect to community-based, collaborative interventions and their role in ECD, the literature provides support for the development of collaborative partnerships.¹ Regarding such programs once established, there tends to be lack of research and limitations in the research methodology to be able to draw strong conclusions.

Multi-strategy approaches, especially those that incorporate community development, coalition building and multi-sectoral collaboration, appear to be more effective than single strategies. Enabling factors have been cited as: a powerful shared vision of the problem to be addressed and what success would look like in solving it; strong relationships and an effective mix of partners; leadership; adequate, sustainable and flexible resources; and efficient structures and processes to do the work of collaboration. With respect to the research on the development of multi-sectoral collaborations designed to support early childhood development in rural communities, similar enablers for success were identified: skills, knowledge and resources of internal and external leaders.

Early childhood intervention programs have a greater impact when there is effective collaboration between program staff, parents, and the community. Program models that look to build relationships across the family, the school, and the community can improve outcomes for low income and socially or culturally marginalized families.

Integrated family and child centres are seen as catalysts to facilitate networking of the family literacy environment that can ultimately help create more literate communities. Child and family hubs can strengthen children's social capital in those communities with few social facilities. There is some evidence that local partnerships delivering environmental interventions result in health gain, although more evidence is needed. Children's participation in consultation has become an important element of planning and community development strategies of government and community organizations.

This review has catalogued intervention resources, of which the online searchable portals (repositories) of interventions may be particularly useful to ECD staff involved with community-based collaborative program and service development. The bibliography of the Appendices document is also a wealth of information, containing over 400 citations of specific programs. Key program citations are footnoted in the main document on pages 53 and 54. Users of this document may want to search specific portals² to identify programs of interest as well as comments regarding effectiveness. These resources are useful starting points for someone interested in developing a community-based collaboration, in addition to the factors in Section 1 and the outcome domains in Sections 2 and 3.

¹ For relevant references, see References 188-195, SECTION V, REFERENCES (Abridgement), and References 97, 101, 103, 395-422, SECTION V, REFERENCES (Main Document).

² Key Canadian sources of best-practice programs include the maternal and child health portal of the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Health Innovation Portal of the Health Council of Canada. In the US, the Healthy Communities Institute support several state and county best practices portals which are populated by an impressive number of programs. The Eurochild publication by Williams (2012) is a useful compendium of inspiring practices incorporating initiatives across Europe.