

OEYCFC Initial Plan for the City of Hamilton

September 2017

Table of Contents

Part One: Introduction and Planning Process..... 3

Part Two: Needs Assessment Highlights..... 6

Part Three: The OEYCFC System - the Conceptual Model 18

Part Four: The OEYCFC System – Building on Assets & Increasing Access 35

Part Five: Key Transition Tasks..... 40

Conclusion..... 43

Part One: Introduction and Planning Process

1. Background

The province of Ontario currently funds two child and family programs in Hamilton: Ontario Early Years Centres (established in 2003) and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (established in 2009/10). Both have provided beneficial programs and services to families in Hamilton for many years.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education (MEDU) released the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework*, which outlines the vision of ensuring that Ontario's children and families are well supported by an early years system that is high quality, seamless, and accessible for children and their families.

In alignment with the commitments made in the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework*, the MEDU announced the provincial plan in early 2016. This plan will move forward with the integration and transformation of existing child and family programs to establish Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). Each OEYCFC program is guided by a provincial framework that provides a common identity and a new funding approach.

Beginning in January 2018, municipalities will be responsible for the local service system planning, implementation, funding, and oversight of the new OEYCFCs. This is part of their existing responsibility for the service system management of child care and other human services. As the local Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), the City of Hamilton is the authority to deliver and manage the early learning and child care system and will be responsible for the implementation and management of OEYCFCs in Hamilton.

The MEDU established key requirements for OEYCFCs that include a suite of required services to be delivered at each site. These services, which are based on the program tenants described in *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014* (HDLH), will be offered free of charge and are designed to meet the diverse needs of children aged 0-6 and their parents and caregivers.

The MEDU's key goals and objectives include:

- Parents and caregivers will have access to high quality services that support them in their role as children's first teachers, enhance their well-being, and enrich their knowledge about early learning and development.
- Children will have access to play- and inquiry-based learning opportunities, and will experience positive developmental health and well-being.
- Parents and caregivers will have opportunities to strengthen their relationships with their children.
- Francophone children and families will have access to French language programs and opportunities to gain enhanced knowledge about language and identity acquisition.
- Indigenous children and families will have access to culturally responsive programming.

- Parents and caregivers will be provided with timely, relevant, and up-to-date information about community and specialized services.
- Local service providers will collaborate and integrate services to meet community needs in an efficient and accessible way.

The provincial mandate to create OEYCFCs provides Hamilton with an opportunity to apply what the community has learned over the past 14 years of providing family support services. The City is committed to building upon the strengths and assets of both the Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) and Parenting and Family Literacy Centre (PFLC) systems, as well as looking for new opportunities to realign services to create a more cohesive system that better meets the needs of families and children living in Hamilton.

2. The Planning Process

The Planning Group

Between 2005 and 2016, the Hamilton Best Start Network was the community collaborative that supported families by offering a broad range of services for children from birth to 12 years of age aimed at ensuring children receive the best possible opportunities. There is a rich history in the Hamilton early years community of bringing together a broad range of stakeholders to assess, plan and implement early years programs and services.

This is particularly true for family support programs. Since their inception Hamilton has engaged in a coordinated and collaborative approach to developing family support programs. In fact, the initial establishment of OEYCs was based on a joint proposal from four local non-profit operators.

The Best Start Network established mechanisms to work towards a seamless early years system including the creation of the Family Support Leadership Table approximately 10 years ago. The Leadership Table played a unique role in the community by focusing on strategic planning and the creation of a system of connected family support programs in Hamilton. This background work and understanding of the Hamilton system of family support services provided a foundation for the development of the OEYCFC plan and made the Leadership Table the logical group to guide and support the OEYCFC planning process.

Beginning in June 2016, the City asked the Leadership Table to focus its efforts on developing the OEYCFC plan thus transforming the Leadership Table into the OEYCFC Planning Group. The OEYCFC Planning Group membership included representatives from the City of Hamilton (Community & Emergency Services Department and Public Health Services), MEDU, local school boards, professional resource centre, and OEYC agencies currently delivering early years programs, including Indigenous and Francophone operators. The group was co-chaired by Grace Mater, Director at the City of Hamilton and Daljit Garry, Executive Director of Wesley Urban Ministries.

The role of the OEYCFC Planning Group was to:

- Provide feedback and advice on the OEYCFC planning process;
- Provide consistent messaging to their staff and the parents/caregivers they serve about the planning process and scope;
- Facilitate access to required needs assessment data and key stakeholders for consultations;
- Validate the needs assessment and planning process findings; and,
- Act as a sounding board for the initial plan.

To help inform the content of the OEYCFC Initial Plan, the Planning Group met monthly from June 2016 to June 2017, contributing feedback and advice throughout the planning process and endorsing the overall direction and concepts.

The Planning Process

The following activities were conducted to support the OEYCFC planning process:

- Collation and synthesis of relevant existing community plans and initiatives;
- A focused OEYCFC needs assessment, including the review of available population and service delivery data, parent and caregiver surveys, activities designed to capture and document children's voices, and key informant interviews;
- A snapshot of local family support programs (including: locations, hours of operation, program offerings, and community partnerships); and
- Mapping exercises aimed at depicting current early years services and assets to identify possible future OEYCFC service delivery areas.

The Planning Group also determined important features of the future Hamilton OEYCFCs, as well as parameters or principles for the planning process. These important features include:

- Ensuring children and families have access to the services that they need, where they need them, and in a way that reflects the unique needs of individual neighborhoods. This plan reflects the diverse needs of our community, including the specific needs of Francophone and Indigenous communities.
- Ensuring parent/caregiver engagement through the promotion of responsive adult-child interactions during play-based learning experiences and ensuring access to a wide range of relevant and timely information and support for parents and caregivers.
- Building upon the elements of the existing family support programs that resonate most with children and families, including providing children with opportunities to learn through exploration, play, and inquiry while building healthy relationships that will support them today and throughout their lives.

Hamilton's OEYCFCs will reflect the views and needs of children and their parents and caregivers. The new system of child and family programs will:

- Address the limitations of the current system by realigning services and creating a more cohesive system;
- Shift towards full service centres, rather than smaller satellites;
- Include a greater emphasis on full service OEYCFC sites with increased programming and hours to better meet the needs of families;
- Ensure access to programs in areas with the greatest population growth trends;
- Promote equitable distribution across the city;
- Ensure decisions are grounded in research and evaluation, and are community-informed;
- Balance a schools first approach with community based planning; and,
- Leverage opportunities to align with school board capital build and Community Hub initiatives.

The Hamilton OEYCFC Initial Plan will begin with highlighting the findings of the local needs assessment. This report will then present the conceptual model of Hamilton's OEYCFC system, including the foundational principles and planning parameters, a description of what a full service OEYCFC looks like, and an exploration about system-wide processes, programs, and supports. This will lead to a section on the number of OEYCFC locations as well as site and operator selection considerations. This report concludes with a description of key transition tasks.

Part Two: Needs Assessment Highlights

Hamilton OEYCFC planning decisions as presented in this Initial Plan were informed by an assessment of local community needs and assets as they relate to early years child and family programs. This assessment included review and analysis of available child and family population data, general community demographic data, and early years program and service availability and utilization data. This information assisted in identifying the needs of Hamilton's children, parents and caregivers, the sector's strengths and key assets, and the system's service gaps and/or duplication.

Consultation with local children, parents and caregivers, early years service providers, and key community partners also informed the needs assessment by providing insight and understanding about how Hamilton's child and family support programs and services could be adjusted to respond to changing community needs.

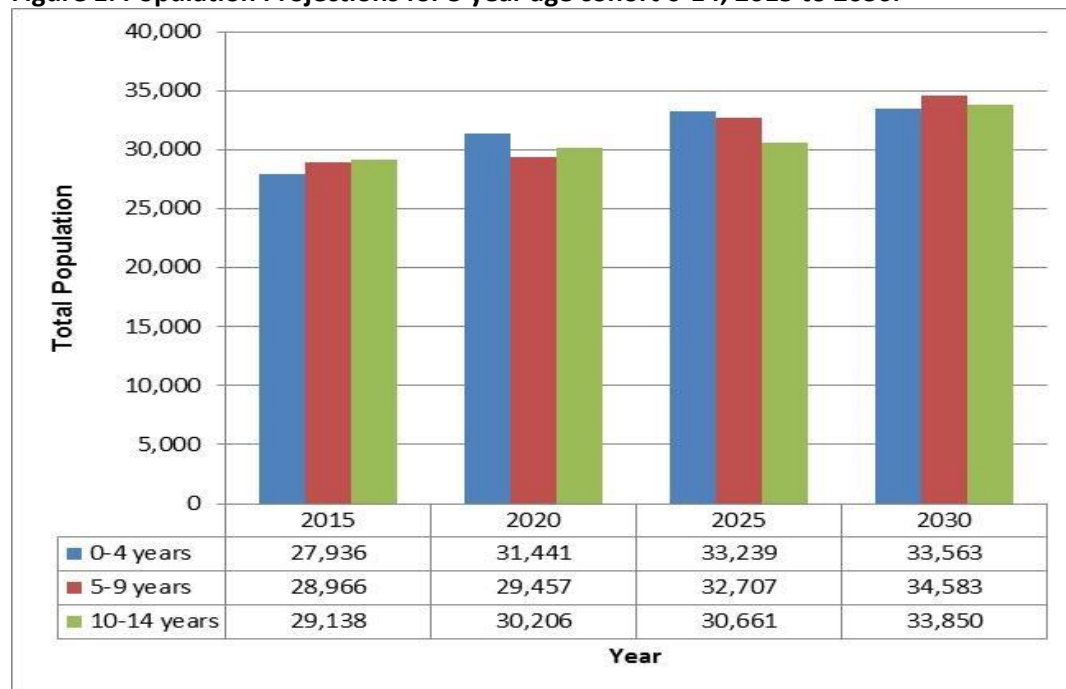
This section provides a high-level overview of the needs assessment findings, which are grouped according to the following themes: population highlights, early years assets, neighbourhood-level analysis of key population indicators, and key stakeholder consultation. See the OEYCFC Needs Assessment document for a more detailed description of needs assessment findings.

1. Population Highlights

Hamilton's total early years population (0 to 12 years) is 73,055 and of this 38,395 children are aged 0-6. The number and density of the child population varies across Hamilton's neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods with the largest number of children (0 to 6 years) are the Central Mountain, Glanbrook/Stoney Creek/Winona area, West Mountain, and Hamilton Centre. Neighbourhoods with the highest density of young children (0-6 years) include Hamilton Centre and Hamilton Mountain.

Over the last two decades, Hamilton experienced a steep decline in the number of children in the city. Looking ahead however, the total number of children (aged 0 to 14 years) in Hamilton is projected to increase at a stable rate over the next 15 years, with an estimated population of 86,040 in 2015 growing to 101,996 by 2030.¹ See Figure 1 for the population breakdown by age group.

Figure 1. Population Projections for 5 year age cohort 0-14, 2015 to 2030.



(Source: Ministry of Finance, Spring 2016.)

Indigenous population

In Canada, Indigenous communities are growing more quickly than the general population and are substantially younger. Hamilton's population of Indigenous peoples is even younger than the average for Indigenous communities across Ontario.² In 2011, the Indigenous population in Hamilton was

¹ Ministry of Finance. (Spring 2016). Ontario Population Projections Update: 2015-2041. Based on the 2011 Census.

² Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton. (2015). Profile of Hamilton's Aboriginal Residents.

approximately 15,840 or 3% of the total population.³ Children under 14 years of age comprise 28% of the total Indigenous population in Hamilton.⁴

The greatest number and density of Indigenous populations are currently in Hamilton Centre and Hamilton East areas.^{5,6} It is projected that the Indigenous child population (under 14 years of age) in Hamilton will rise to 5,041 by the year 2030, with almost half of these (2,421) living in Hamilton Centre and Hamilton East neighbourhoods.^{7,8}

These population projections likely underestimate the true size and growth of the Indigenous population in Hamilton. There is a historical tendency among Indigenous populations to abstain from participating in census data completion.⁹

Francophone population

In 2011, 6,765 Hamilton residents reported French as their mother tongue (first language learned at home and still understood). This represents 1.3% of the total population in Hamilton.¹⁰ French speaking residents tend to live in greater numbers (i.e., 10% of the population or more) in Hamilton Centre, East Hamilton, East Mountain, and Flamborough areas.

A report by the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), estimates that the Francophone population in Hamilton is 8,235 or 1.6% of the total population. The same report notes that compared to other Francophone populations in the surrounding region, Hamilton's Francophone population is younger and more likely to be born outside of Canada.¹¹

³ Ibid.

⁴ Morency, J-D., Caron-Malenfant, E., Coulombe, S. & Langlois, S. (2015). Projections of the Aboriginal Population and Households in Canada (91-552-X).

⁵ Statistics Canada. (2011). National Household Survey Focus on Geography Series Hamilton CMA Aboriginal Peoples.

⁶ Statistics Canada. (2016). Census Standard Geographies.

⁷ See footnotes 5, 6 and 7.

⁸ Statistics Canada reports that Indigenous populations have projected population growth rates between 2006-2031 that reach between 4.0% and 5.3% (Morency et al., 2015). These growth rates vary by groups of Indigenous populations with North American Indians having larger growth rates than Métis and Inuit. However, for the purposes of making population projections for Hamilton, a rate of 2.2% will be used as a representation of growth that takes into account the constant ethnic mobility and constant fertility for Indigenous peoples (Morency et al., 2015).

⁹ Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. (2015). Profile of Hamilton's Aboriginal Residents.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. (2011). Census 2011.

¹¹ Entite². (March 2012). Demographic Profile of Francophone Communities in the Regions of Waterloo Wellington Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant (WWHNBH). Rev Sept 2012.

2. Highlights of Hamilton's Early Years Assets

Hamilton has a strong foundation of child and family support programs, which currently consists of Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), established in 2003, and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs), established in the 2009/10 school year.

Ontario Early Years Centres

OEYCs provide free, universal opportunities for all children to participate in play- and inquiry-based programs, as well as support to all parents and caregivers in their roles. Through these programs, parents and caregivers also have access to information about child development and specialized support, as needed.

Hamilton's OEYCs are currently operated by four non-profit, lead agencies (Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Child Care Inc., Today's Family, and Wesley Urban Ministries) and two additional community partners (Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg and Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara).

OEYCs include a combination of main sites, satellite sites, and some mobile and outreach services. Main sites provide drop-in programming for families a minimum of five days a week, including some evening and weekend hours. Most OEYC sites operate on a year round basis (i.e., programs are offered during school breaks). Satellite sites provide programming on a part-time basis, in either temporary or permanent locations. OEYCs are located in schools and community-based sites across Hamilton, such as recreation centres, libraries, faith-based buildings, and housing sites. Additionally, there are specific sites focused on providing services to Indigenous families, Francophone families, and young parents. Mobile services and early years programming offered through partnerships provide two to three hours of drop-in programming once per week in a range of non-permanent locations, including recreation centres, community housing, schools, and parks.

OEYC budgets have remained flat since their initial allocation in 2002/2003. As a result, OEYCs are operating with substantially less purchasing power than when they first opened. This has meant that many of the current OEYC sites offer partial programs and services with part-time hours. The lack of new investments has also limited the ability to offer family support programs in areas of high population growth (such as, Binbrook and Winona).

Parenting and Family Literacy Centres

PFLCs are free, school-based programs for parents and their children (0 to 6 years) that are operated by the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board. Each site has one consistent staff member and the programming is the same at each site - building essential skills through music, play, and family literacy and encouraging families to be part of their children's learning.

PFLC programming is offered for approximately four hours each morning from Monday to Friday, with no weekend hours. Since PFLCs are located in schools, they operate on school instructional days only, with no programming during Winter Break, March Break, PA days, or summer break.

Originally, PFLCs were conceived as a way of equalizing school opportunities for children in “high-needs” neighbourhoods.¹² Local school boards were able to define “high-needs” in the local community context using available neighbourhood demographic data (i.e., family income, family characteristics) and school data (i.e., EDI results). As a result, PFLCs tend to be located in elementary schools serving high density, urban neighbourhoods. In Hamilton, this resulted in PFLCs often having an OEYC site in relative close proximity serving the same or adjacent neighbourhoods, leading to the perception of service duplication in some areas of the city.

A recent study by Underwood and Trent-Kratz¹³ found that OEYCs and PFLCs have unique contributions and strengths. They propose that the role of PFLCs in the system of services may be related to connecting families with schools (i.e., introducing families to schools and connecting them with school-based resources and support), while community-based family support programs (OEYCs) have greater linkages to other community-based services. This could be attributed to the large number of partnering organizations working within the OEYC model and the fact that these organizations serve families as well as children.¹⁴

The OEYCFC planning consultations identified the following strengths of the PFLC program:

- Consistent programming and staff from site to site;
- Location convenience (in schools);
- High levels of parent satisfaction attributed to the small, welcoming environment; and
- Strong connections to school staff and school-based resources (as described above).

OEYCs were identified as having the following strengths:

- Year round operating calendar and extended hours of operation (including weekend and evening hours offered at some sites);
- Comprehensive nature of programs and services offered as full service sites;
- A more geographically dispersed distribution of Centres across the city; and
- Strong linkages to a wide range of community-based services (such as, child care, public health, preschool speech and language, etc.).

¹² Ontario Ministry of Education. (2010). Parenting and Family Literacy Centres: Resource binder. Toronto, CA: Queen’s Printer for Ontario.

¹³ Underwood, K and Trent-Kratz, M. (2015). *Contributions of School-Based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres in an Early Childhood Service System*. School Community Journal, 2015, Vol. 25, No. 1.

¹⁴ Underwood, K and Killoran, I. (2012). *Parent and Family Perception of Engagement: Lessons from Early Years Programs and Supports*. Canadian Journal of Education 35, 4: 376 – 414.

Given the unique strengths of PFLCs and OEYC, Underwood and Trent-Kratz¹⁵ conclude that there should be a choice for parents that is a mix of school-based and community-based family support programs given their discrete functions in terms of supporting family connections to other services.

In Hamilton, the Beasley Community Centre hosts an OEYC site and a PFLC site. This community centre is co-located with Dr. J. Edgar Davey Elementary School and operated by Wesley Urban Ministries in partnership with the City of Hamilton Recreation Department and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. The co-location of the OEYC and PFLC served as a model for the overall OEYCFC planning process.

There are currently 45 OEYC sites and 14 PFLC sites in Hamilton (Table 1).

Table 1. Number OEYC and PFLC Sites in Hamilton, Spring 2017

	Type of Site	Number of Site(s)
OEYC	General Sites	38
	Aboriginal	2
	French Language	2
	Young Parent	3
PFLC	HWDSB	8
	HWCDSD	6
TOTAL		59

(Source: City of Hamilton, 2017.)

A survey of current OEYC and PFLC programs, hours of operation, staffing, funding levels and sources, and community partnerships was conducted as part of the OEYCFC planning process. The findings were used to inform the development of the local service delivery model as described in this plan.

Utilization of child and family support programs

Approximately 19% of families in Hamilton are currently accessing OEYC sites.¹⁶ Overall, Hamilton's family support programs (OEYCs and PFLCs) reported more than 121,000 child visits and over 89,000 parent/caregiver or parent/guardian visits in 2014/15.

Early years community assets

A list of Early Years Community Assets for the City of Hamilton was generated to inform the planning of neighbourhood locations for future OEYCFCs. Community assets identified for this exercise include OEYCs, PFLCs, child care, schools, before and after school programs, immigration gathering centres, Indigenous gathering centres, recreation centres, libraries, and hospitals. See the full OEYCFC Needs Assessment document for further details.

¹⁵ Underwood, K and Trent-Kratz, M. (2015). Contributions of School-Based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres in an Early Childhood Service System. School Community Journal, 2015, Vol. 25, No. 1

¹⁶ City of Hamilton. (Spring 2017). Early Years Research Team.

3. Neighbourhood-level Analysis of Key Indicators

As part of the community needs assessment process the OEYCFC Planning Group engaged in an analysis of key indicators at the neighbourhood-level. This analysis served as one input into the process of identifying geographic priority areas for future OEYCFC locations.

The key indicators chosen for this analysis relate to Hamilton Best Start¹⁷ outcomes for children, families, communities, and the future. They include: education rates, low income rates, family type, diversity, developmental health (i.e., EDI vulnerabilities), early years program engagement (i.e., OEYC participation and PFLC visits), child care, child care fee subsidy, and population growth and size.

The analysis of key indicator data identified the areas in Hamilton that appear to have greater readiness for child and family program growth and expansion. They are:

- Urban areas located in Central Mountain, West Mountain and Hamilton Centre; and,
- Upper Stoney Creek, Glanbrook/Stoney Creek/Winona and Flamborough areas, which are anticipated to have the greatest population growth over the next 15 years. However, these areas ranked in the middle based on other key indicators of need and desired outcomes.

4. Key Stakeholder Consultation Highlights

Consultations with parents, caregivers, family support program providers, and other key stakeholders were conducted to seek input, ideas, and advice about the existing child and family support programs in Hamilton. The focus was on identifying what is currently working well and the needs, challenges/barriers, service gaps, and service overlaps.

Parallel to the overall OEYCFC planning process, Hamilton received *Journey Together* Capacity Funding as part of the Ontario Government's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Calls to Action. These resources enabled the City of Hamilton, in collaboration with Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg, to conduct a culturally sensitive and holistic community engagement process in order to identify local needs, opportunities and priorities for culturally relevant, Indigenous-led early years' programs and services. Highlights from this work can be found in the accompanying OEYCFC Needs Assessment document.

In addition to the above consultations, the findings from Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan (EYCP) consultations, conducted in 2015 to 2016, were incorporated into the OEYCFC planning discussions. Highlights from these consultations are provided below.

¹⁷ For more information on Hamilton's Best Start outcomes see: <http://hamiltonbeststart.ca/>

Parent Survey

The goal of the parent surveys was to engage families who traditionally did not have a voice in previous Family Support Program (FSP) engagement activities (e.g. surveying, focus groups): almost one-quarter, 22% of those who responded to the surveys, shared that they have never visited a FSP. Survey highlights are provided below.

Parents' interests in visiting a FSP in Hamilton

- Top three reasons why parents are interested in coming to FSP are: their child's socialization with other children; interacting with their children; and meeting/talking with other parents.
- More than a third (35%) of parent respondents identified that using the resources they do not have at home as a reason for visiting FSP centres and almost a quarter (23%) visited to get a break.
- Parents did not have as much interest in visiting FSP centres to be connected to information (18%), get referrals to other services (11%) or because FSP centres were close to other services they use (12%).
- Generally, parents are more interested in visiting FSP centres to meet with other parents (45%) and staff (35%) than to attend workshops (17%), to have questions answered, or to pick up information (18%).
- Greater proportions of Francophone parents' valued referrals for other services when compared to all survey respondents overall.
- Referral and proximity to other services is important among the group of parent participants who attend Indigenous sites.
- Francophone and Indigenous surveys reported greater interest in meeting with other parents, staff, getting questions answered, picking up information and attending workshops.

Children's interests in visiting a FSP in Hamilton

- Parents responded that the top three reasons why children visit FSP centres was to exploring activities, to play with other children and playing with toys.
- A greater proportion within the parent participants who attend Indigenous sites indicated that feeling included and welcomed, enjoying learning, and access to food and social expression are of greater interest to their children.
- Francophone children had more interest in visiting with staff and access to food when compared to the respondents from the FDK and community survey groups

Challenges with visiting FSPs

- The top three reasons identified as challenges among parents who are infrequent visitors or never visit a FSP centre were inaccessible hours, not knowing about the centres, and 'other' reasons.
- Francophone and Indigenous surveys report less challenges than the community and FDK survey respondents.

- The Francophone top challenges are the same as the larger group.
- The top challenges for parent respondents who attend Indigenous sites were not knowing about the centres, other, and proximity to other services. The 'other' responses were: employment, child in school, and the distance between home and centres.

Referral sources

- Word of mouth continues to be the main source for referral to FSPs.
- More parents with children in the younger age categories (below 4.5 years) report the use of social media and web sites as a source of referral when compared to the FDK and community survey groups.

Caregiver Survey

A slightly modified version of the parent survey was used to gather input and feedback from caregivers. The term "caregiver" includes licensed and unlicensed home-based child care professionals. Survey results from caregivers do not differ greatly from the parent (i.e., FDK and community) survey group. For example, word of mouth is the way most caregivers and parents learn about the centres. Caregivers responded that they value social interactions, access to resources (for example, toys and activities) or staff, access to food, friendly/inclusive environments, and the opportunity for children to learn and express themselves. Hours of access to centres, transportation, and not knowing about the centres are the most reported challenges.

Children's Voices Project

*How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014 (HDLH) was the catalyst for seeking ways to include children's voices in the planning process that would "honour and respect children as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential...[that will] more likely [inform the OEYCFC planning] to deliver programs and services that value and build on children's strengths and abilities."*¹⁸

Highlights from the artifacts include:

- A sense of belonging and community was inextricably linked for parents and children.
- Parents emphasized, especially among Indigenous and Francophone families, the importance of a welcoming and inclusive environment for their children.
- Parents and children appreciate activities (e.g. Baby Massage, Little Chef's, Breastfeeding, and Parent and Baby Networks) that support and strengthen the inextricable link between parent and child.
- Children greatly value how the centres support their well-being and expressed a desire for more gym time, outdoor play, and physical and recreational activities.

¹⁸ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years. Page, 6.

- Children’s engagement was often observed in the artifacts to be during “active, creative, and meaningful” interactions with parents, educators, other children, play spaces/equipment, and activities.
- A children’s right to “be me” and “have a voice” is prevalent in the quotes and artifacts submitted to give children a voice. Activities that provide opportunities for children to express themselves were often suggestions for change and emphasized more singing, drumming, dancing, making music, art, crafts, and fun.

Community partner feedback

Findings from the OEYCFC community partner consultations are incorporated into the service delivery model, system coordination, and site/operator considerations outlined in the accompanying Initial Plan.

The EYCP findings related to Hamilton’s family support programs served as an important foundation for the OEYCFC planning process and are highlighted below.

Progress made over the past three years:

- Improved communication, planning, and working relationships between the OEYCs and PLFCs;
- Creation of new and innovative services and initiatives (such as, Beasley Child & Family Centre, Children’s Charter, and continuation of the Check It Out Drop In);
- Collaboration with other early years providers regarding inter-professional training and services; and
- Increased value placed on program evaluation and evidence-informed practice.

Challenges and obstacles faced over the past three years:

- Different reporting mechanisms/data availability for the two family support programs;
- Front-line integration of early years services varies greatly across the system;
- Access to services varies across sub-populations;
- Inadequate and/or stagnant funding-levels; and
- The need to stabilize the early years system and view it as a system, rather than a collection of programs.

Current gaps in the family support and/or early years system:

- Outreach to families in the child welfare and mental health system;
- Unclear access points/pathways for families;
- Lack of clarity regarding the future direction of Community Hubs and how family support programs fit within these hubs; and
- The need to work closely with providers that have expertise regarding the needs of diverse/special populations.

Big Issues/Opportunities:

- Pursue Community Hubs and cross-sectoral partnerships;
- Adopt a family-centred focus and determinants of health lens; and
- Ensure the quality of EY programs/services.
- Opportunity to plan and align across the entire early years system (child care, BASPs, and OEYCFCs)

Overall, the main themes from the EYCP consultation were reinforced by the findings from the OEYCFC parent, caregiver and children consultations.

5. Implications of the Needs Assessment Findings

Key findings from this local needs assessment will help to shape Hamilton's initial plans for the transition to OEYCFCs. Salient population trends and needs, notable system assets and gaps and their system planning implications are outlined below.

Limited funding increases over the past 15 years have meant the local family support system is challenged to meet the changing needs and locations of Hamilton's family populations. The transition to OEYCFCs represents an opportunity to ensure the system of family support programs is more reflective of and responsive to Hamilton's changing demographics including:

- A stable rate of projected child population growth in the city of Hamilton over the next 15 years
- High rates of child population growth in Upper Stoney Creek, Glanbrook/Stoney Creek/Winona/Waterdown and Flamborough areas over the next 15 years
- Neighbourhood pockets with a high density of young children yet limited availability of family support services in close proximity (such as, parts of Hamilton Centre, Hamilton Mountain (around the Linc) and parts of lower and upper Stoney Creek)
- High growth rates amongst Indigenous populations in the city overall and especially in Central and East Lower Hamilton

Hamilton is fortunate to have a strong foundation of child and family support programs, Parent and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs) and Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), operated by a group of local non-profit organizations with a history and on-going willingness to plan and work together for the benefit of Hamilton's children and families. Strengths of the PFLC program include: a consistent approach to programming and staffing from site to site, the convenience of being located in schools and the strength of connections with school staff and school-based resources. Strengths of the current OEYC program include: year round operating calendar and offering evening and weekend hours, the comprehensive nature of programs and services offered at many sites, and strong linkages to a wide range of community-based services (such as, public health, preschool speech and language, child care, etc.). Hamilton's OEYCFC system is poised to build upon these strengths and aim for a mix of school-based and community-based family support programs.

While this strong foundation exists, the transition to OEYCFCs presents the city with an opportunity to address the following identified system challenges and gaps:

- Minimal funding increases have resulted in a limited ability for the system to expand hours or locations to meet the changing needs of Hamilton families (e.g. demand for weekend and evening hours, demand in areas of the city that have experienced rapid population growth, etc.).
- Some PFLCs and OEYCs are situated in relative close proximity to one another serving the same or adjacent neighbourhoods leading to the perception of service duplication.
- Unclear access points/pathways for families and the need for continued integration of early years services at the front-line.
- The need for enhanced outreach to families who are not currently engaged but would benefit from the services and supports offered by local family support programs. More specifically, outreach to families already connected to the child welfare and mental health systems and the need to work more closely with providers that have expertise regarding the needs of diverse/special populations.
- More support for inclusive programs serving children who require inclusive supports to participate.
- A lack of consistent and efficient data collection and reporting mechanisms.
- The need to continue to stabilize the early years system and view it as a system versus collection of programs.
- The need to identify how the OEYCFCs will align with the broader community hubs strategy.

Parents, caregivers and children's voices provide data to reinforce the desire for the movement towards emphasizing full service sites with expanded hours for families to access centres across the city that are coordinated and close to other services, but offer more space to avoid crowding and a space for physical activities (both in/outdoors). Feedback also suggested that larger full service sites should be better equipped or located in spaces that are inclusive and appeal to the whole family, offering a wide-range of services for parents and their younger and older children.

Equitable access and inclusion can be better realized when sites are selected that are AODA compliant, situated in easy to access locations and that are consistently branded with what parents already experience as "comfortable, welcoming and friendly" environments. Referral sources suggest that virtual services may not be utilized as much as other sources for accessing services (i.e. word of mouth).

Achieving cultural relevance will require planning and consultation with the various neighbourhood locations to determine the relevant cultural practices and needs of the communities that surround the full service sites. Indigenous and Francophone services are already collaborating at the system and site-specific levels to ensure that representation of their communities is present across the system, while still offering concentrated cultural services at sites designated and well-positioned for these communities.

Parents, caregivers, children, and staff who have developed strong relationships and attachments to particular locations and organizations will need support to form attachments and relationships at new or relocated full service sites.

Finally, these needs assessment findings represent a snapshot in time. It is essential for the future system to have the capacity for on-going data collection and monitoring to inform system- and operational-level planning. This type of ongoing Early Years data and information analysis will support the system/programs in being responsive to children's, families' and caregivers' needs as well as changes in the demographics of Hamilton's neighbourhoods. In addition, ongoing data collection provides an opportunity to learn about the impact of these programs at the system- and program- level for continuous improvement.

Part Three: The OEYCFC System - the Conceptual Model

The Ministry of Education's (MEDU) decision to create OEYCFCs provided Hamilton with an opportunity to reflect on what a vibrant, responsive system of child and family support services should look like in order to meet the needs of today's children and their parents and caregivers. Under the leadership of the City of Hamilton and the guidance of the OEYCFC Planning Group, a conceptual model for Hamilton OEYCFCs was developed. The following section describes the components of this system, including foundational principles and planning parameters, the expectations for a full service OEYCFC, and the city-wide system features that integrates the OEYCFCs amongst themselves and with key community partners.

1. Foundational Principles and Planning Parameters

The foundation of the OEYCFC system is based on the Hamilton Early Years Community Plan 2016-2020 (EYCP). The EYCP was built on three seminal resources: Hamilton Parent Charter of Rights,¹⁹ Hamilton's Charter of Rights of Children and Youth,²⁰ and the 2014 framework created by the MEDU entitled *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* (HDLH).²¹ These three resources provide the values and beliefs that will inform all of the child and family support programs and services provided in Hamilton.

Hamilton Parent Charter of Rights is an agreement that outlines a service provider's commitment to and parental expectations of parent engagement. The intent is for the charter

¹⁹ Hamilton Parent Charter of Rights. For more information see: <http://hamiltonbeststart.ca/info-research/>

²⁰ Hamilton's Charter of Rights of Children and Youth. For more information see: <http://hamiltonbeststart.ca/community-initiatives/>

²¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* (HDLH), 2014.

to complement the mission/vision/values of early years organizations and reflect what providers do daily for children and families.

With the help of educators, children, and youth engaged in conversations about rights and responsibilities, **Hamilton's Charter of Rights of Children and Youth** was created. It is a reflection of the contributions of over 2,000 children and youth, aged 0 to 18 years, across the community who made this charter a truly made-in-Hamilton document, written by and for children and youth.

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (HDLH) focuses on creating early years environments and experiences that support a continuum of learning for the child, the family, the community, and the educators. It identifies the four foundational conditions necessary for healthy child development: belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression. All of Hamilton OEYCFCs will be required to use HDLH to guide the development and delivery of programs and services.

Based on these resources, the OEYCFC conceptual model envisions a system that:

- Supports the development of learning environments that ensure the success of children, families, and the professionals who serve them.
- Eliminates barriers that prevent some children and families from achieving the foundational goals of belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression.
- Enables the community to assess its progress with regard to early learning.
- Engages families as full partners in the development and refinement of the early years system.
- Supports families/providers/educators with engaging in reflection and discussion with others around pedagogy and practice.

In addition to the foundational principles and values identified above, the OEYCFC system will consider the following planning parameters that are drawn from the MEDU planning guidelines and the City of Hamilton's expectations for the transition:

- New centres/sites will reflect the needs and perspectives of the children and their parents and caregivers.
- A range of service delivery and outreach strategies will be required to meet the diverse needs of the community.
- The system will shift towards full service centres rather than smaller satellite sites. This could mean that operators may change their service delivery geographies.
- A balancing of the 'schools-first approach' with the need to build upon the community's existing assets and strengths.
- Identify opportunities where OEYCFCs can be integrated with or otherwise connected to other programs and services for people of all ages in alignment with the Community Hub approach.

2. Full Service Centres: What Does a Full Service OEYCFC Look Like?

The MEDU planning guidelines indicate that the City will have the flexibility to offer OEYCFC programs and services through a variety of service delivery methods (i.e., centres, mobile services, and virtual resources). Physical program sites – or centres – are mandatory and may be offered in a school or community building/space, or may stand alone. Across the city as a whole, centre-based core services must be available year round for a minimum of five days per week, including either Saturday or Sunday.

Hamilton's vision for OEYCFCs is consistent with the MEDU's expectations. Based on the local needs assessment and consultation findings, Hamilton seeks to move towards offering full **service sites** in **permanent locations**. Some sites will be open on a year round basis, six days per week with some evening hours, depending on demonstrated community needs and priorities. Other sites may operate on a part-time basis with hours of operation reflecting how to best accommodate the families and neighbourhoods being served.

All of Hamilton OEYCFCs will provide mandatory core services, including outreach. Centres may provide enhanced or optional services (i.e., mobile or virtual resources) depending on neighbourhood requirements and/or resource availability. Each centre and the system as a whole are expected to build and foster relationships with other community early years partners. The following describes each of the components of a Hamilton OEYCFC.

Mandatory Core Services

Hamilton OEYCFCs will build on the programs and services currently provided by Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs). Each OEYCFC (full and part time) will provide the full range of core services for children (aged 0 to 6) and their parents and caregivers. However, the family-centred philosophy of OEYCFCs indicates that families arriving with children over 6 years of age are also welcome.

Core services have three equally important components: engaging parents and caregivers, supporting early learning and development, and making connections for families. Examples of core services include drop-in programs for children and families, information sharing and discussion groups, pre- and post-natal supports, and connecting families to specialized community services or community supports and resources. See Table 2 for additional examples. Core programs and services are to be viewed through an asset-based approach and child-friendly lens and must align with the foundations of HDLH (i.e., belonging, engagement, wellbeing, and expression).

Table 2. OEYCFC Mandatory Core Services

OEYCFC Core Services	
Engaging Parents & Caregivers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions and information sharing • Pre- and post-natal supports • Targeted outreach activities 	Making Connections for Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to parent concerns about child's development • Information sharing and connecting with specialized community services • Information sharing about programs/services for whole family beyond early years
Supporting Early Learning & Development Drop-in or other programs that build responsive adult-child relationships & encourage children's exploration.	

(Source: Ontario Ministry of Education. (July 2016). Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers.)

Core services must be designed and delivered in ways that are responsive to diverse populations in alignment with local needs (e.g., diverse cultures and languages, children of varying abilities, various family structures, and newcomers). This includes providing French language programs and culturally responsive programs and services for Indigenous children and families.

During the OEYCFC planning consultations, the need for a consistent and experienced “greeter” and “system navigator” at centres was identified. Currently, there is literature to support how having welcoming and personable staff (i.e., remembering details about children and family members and responding to the individual needs of families) is critical to the success of family support programs.²² Therefore, in addition to the core services described above, each OEYCFC will ensure that key staff are trained and knowledgeable about making families and children feel welcome in the OEYCFC space. This greeter/navigator function is also one way of fulfilling the “making connections for families” mandate of OEYCFCs. One of the purposes of this role is to get to know new families, provide them with an orientation to the centre (tailored to the family's particular circumstances, interests, and needs), share information, and, as appropriate, facilitate warm connections with child care, schools, health, specialized community services (such as children's rehabilitation services), and child welfare. This role also involves providing information about programs and services that are available for the whole family beyond the early years.

Further exploration of this staff function, including learning from the experiences of other municipalities and their community connection strategies within local family centres is required during the next phase of OEYCFC implementation planning.

²² Dunst, C. J., & Trivette, C. M. (2001). Parenting supports and resources, help giving practices, and parenting competence. Asheville, NC: Winterberry Press.

Targeted Outreach – A Core Service

Targeted outreach is a mandatory service for all OEYCFCs and is meant to ensure that programs and services are responsive to the changing needs and capacities of children and parents/caregivers in the community. Outreach means going beyond the walls of the centre and engaging specific parents and caregivers, particularly those that are not currently using and would benefit from family support services, with the goal of connecting them to OEYCFC sites and core services. Core outreach also means promoting and informing families about OEYCFCs. The goal of outreach is to actively engage individuals in the family support system and to foster **two-way, iterative learning and relationships** (families and staff forming relationships that lead to families learning about OEYCFC programs and services and OEYCFC staff learning about families' circumstances and needs). Key in this exchange is learning about the accessibility barriers and identifying ways to ameliorate them. Ways to remove barriers will vary from family to family and neighbourhood to neighbourhood, so each OEYCFC will be encouraged to implement community outreach strategies that are **fluid and responsive** to meet the unique needs of each neighborhood's children and families.

While many outreach activities will be **tailored** to the unique characteristics and circumstances of each neighborhood, there will also be a **city-wide and centrally coordinated branding and marketing** approach so that outreach activities will be recognizable throughout Hamilton.

It is envisioned that each OEYCFC will identify specific staff who are interested in developing **specialized outreach skills and expertise**. Part of this function involves developing relationships and inter-professional connections with key community partners and neighbourhood groups.

The OEYCFC coordinating mechanisms – specifically, the professional learning component (described later in this plan) - provides opportunities for OEYCFC staff and centres to learn from each other about the effectiveness of various outreach strategies, as well as to access further training to effectively establish relationships with parents and community engagement techniques. Access to neighbourhood-level population data, care pathways resources, and evaluation supports are important resources that will develop and refine effective outreach strategies. These resources will be available to OEYCFCs through the coordinating mechanisms outlined below (see below section on data analysis and outcome monitoring).

Different outreach approaches should be used for different neighbourhoods and target populations. Outreach can take shape by inviting key community partners “in” by hosting open houses or offering space to service provider partners for specific programs or events. Outreach can also involve taking OEYCFC staff “out” by visiting community partner programs serving the same population. The following are two examples of what OEYCFC outreach activities might look like.

Example 1. Staff at an OEYCFC site identify a large population of young children and families living in a nearby social housing complex that are not visiting the OEYCFC space. The OEYCFC's

outreach strategy could involve first connecting with the social housing complex's liaison worker to inquire about the families living in the building and seeking the worker's advice on how best to engage interested families. Engagement activities could take many forms, including: providing the liaison worker with information about the OEYCFC to share with families, OEYCFC staff and the liaison worker co-hosting a one-time event with the goal of bringing families together to hear from them and determine what might facilitate their attending the programs, or offering a time-limited program (e.g., reading circle) on-site. Lessons learned from the engagement will be used by the OEYCFC staff to inform program planning and the selection of service delivery approaches with the goal of bringing these families into the permanent OEYCFC site.

Example 2. A local elementary school has experienced increased enrollment of children whose families have recently arrived to Canada. The principal notices that the majority of these children have younger siblings and, having recently received a package of information about Hamilton's OEYCFCs, reaches out to the local OEYCFC located several blocks away. The OEYCFC staff mentions this to the visiting Public Health Nurse (PHN) who has noticed a large group of newcomer mothers with young children accessing primary care and maternal health services at a nearby community hub. Many of these families do not speak English and although the PHN has shared information about the local OEYCFC, the families have not yet made it through the centre's doors. The OEYCFC outreach strategy could involve organizing a pop-up kiosk for several weeks or months at the community hub on the same days as the primary health care program is offered. The OEYCFC staff - with input and involvement from hub staff – could offer culturally engaging programming to inform and allow the families to experience what an OEYCFC is all about. Over time, linkages and relationships will develop and OEYCFC staff can identify and remove the barriers that impede these families from participating in the full service sites. One could imagine scenarios in which the families themselves, once connected to the OEYCFC, become champions and encourage and support other families to participate. In fact, this is what parents and caregivers talked about in terms of becoming “connected” to family support programs during the OEYCFC consultations.

Enhanced Services

In addition to the mandatory core services, Hamilton's vision for local OEYCFCs incorporates opportunities for enhanced services. These are services that OEYCFCs may offer beyond the mandatory core services. Examples of these include mobile services, virtual services, and local phone services. These optional services will be developed based on a particular neighborhood or community's identified needs and priorities, as well as resource availability.

As the OEYCFC system evolves, decision-making around whether or not to offer (and how) enhanced and optional services will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood and from centre to centre. For example, an OEYCFC's outreach activities could result in the identification of a need to co-offer a reading

circle program at a rural library branch for a specified period of time to make connections with families that are not currently accessing their area's OEYCFC. If a lack of transportation options is the primary accessibility barrier for these families, then developing a proposal for mobile services could be one of the response options.

Hamilton's OEYCFC system will consider providing mobile services when there is a defined need and a strong rationale (such as, serving families living in a rural area or when a large population of non-users are living in close proximity to one another). OEYCFC mobile services will be time-limited and purposeful by targeting a specific group or neighborhood that is not currently accessing OEYCFC core services but would benefit from doing so. Mobile services will place emphasis on "the person" (i.e., OEYCFC staff) traveling to places where children and families naturally convene (schools, recreation centres, and libraries). Where possible, OEYCFC mobile services will seek partnerships in order to leverage existing mobile service delivery infrastructure. The development of mobile OEYCFC services is contingent upon resource availability.

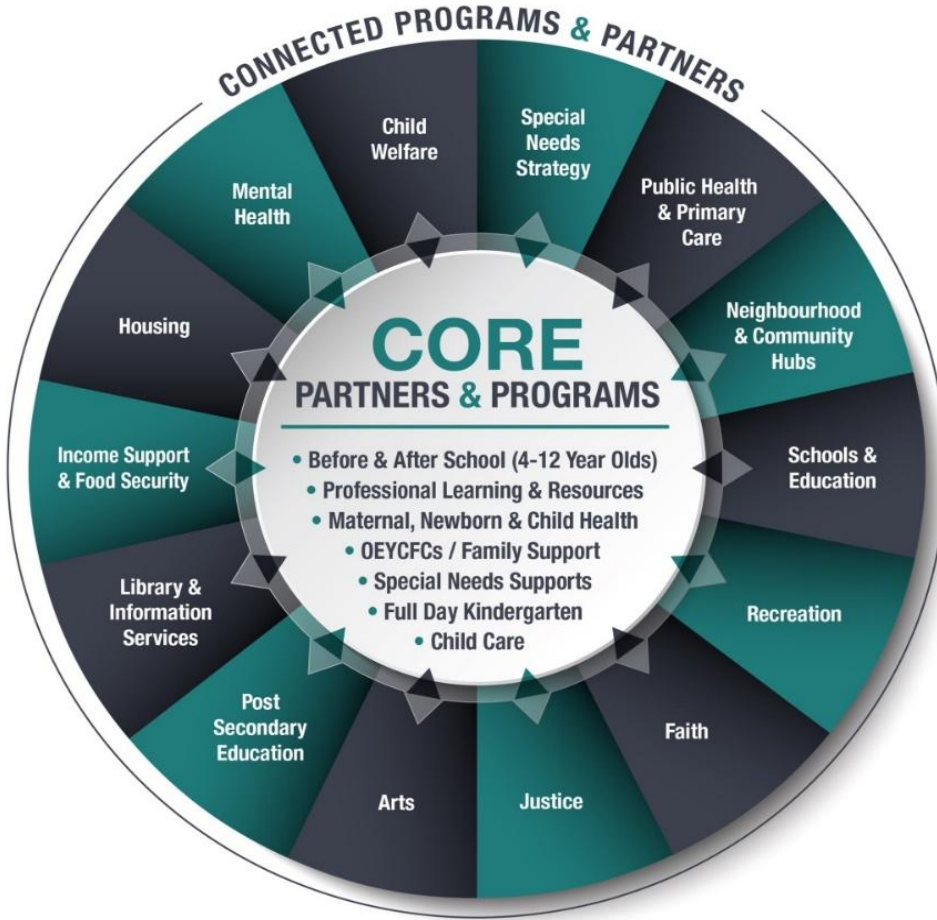
The MEDU OEYCFC planning guidelines identify local phone lines as an optional service delivery method to be used at the discretion of individual CMSMs. In Hamilton, information about OEYCFC programs and services, including information about child development, parenting supports, and play- and inquiry-based learning, is provided through the Early Years Information Line.

Core and Connected Programs and Partners

Building on the core and enhanced services outlined above, Hamilton OEYCFCs will work closely with their key early years community partners (see Figure 2) to facilitate smooth transitions and referrals (e.g., maternal, newborn and child health, child care, Full Day Kindergarten (FDK), and specialized services.).

Additionally, Hamilton OEYCFCs will draw upon the expertise and resources of a range of "connected programs and partners" (e.g., employment and training programs, mental health, child welfare, and housing) to collaboratively offer additional programs and services at OEYCFCs that align with the needs and priorities of the children and families within their neighbourhoods (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Early Years Core and Connected Partners and Programs



While most key partnerships (i.e., public health, child care, education, and specialized supports) will be offered and coordinated on a city-wide basis, others will be neighbourhood-specific (e.g., settlement programs, employment and training, and neighbourhood development).

Each OEYCFC site will strive to enhance access for families to these partners, including creating an on-site space for connected partners to provide early years programs and services (where appropriate and possible). The greeter/navigator staff function (described previously) is another mechanism with which OEYCFCs can increase access to connected programs and services.

The OEYCFC system will strive to ensure equitable access to connected partners throughout the community. This will be achieved by establishing system-wide protocols and scheduling processes (described later in this section). These system-wide protocols will also ensure that OEYCFC programs and services collaborate with, but do not duplicate existing community programs delivered by other organizations, such as breastfeeding clinics offered by local hospitals, public health, and birthing centres.

Hamilton OEYCFCs will support family engagement in children's learning by creating opportunities for families to establish a relationship with their neighbourhood school(s), school staff, and school-based

programs and supports (such as, kindergarten teachers, school PHN, and language or immigration services).

Through the engagement process that helped shape this initial plan, it was identified that certain sectors and groups require targeted strategies to connect their services, programs, and the people they serve to the family support service system. System-wide efforts will be made to maintain and further strengthen the critical connections with child welfare services, the young parent collaborative, partners that serve children and families with specialized needs such as Contact, McMaster Rehabilitation and Autism programs, recreation programs, and Hamilton's Neighborhood Action Strategy.

The engagement process will also focus on linking to local planning tables such as the Early Years Equity and Engagement Advisory Group, Special Needs Resourcing Work Cluster and the Infant and Early Years Mental Health Working Group.

Staffing

Qualified staff teams – including Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) - will be responsible for delivering OEYCFC programs and services at every centre. RECEs have specialized knowledge and expertise related to child development and play- and inquiry-based learning that is essential in the delivery of high quality early years programs and services (e.g., drop-in programs).

The MEDU planning guidelines indicate that the City will have the flexibility to determine if additional staff with specialized skill sets may be desirable. For example, expertise in community outreach, system navigation, and adult education were identified as valuable skill sets and expertise during the Hamilton OEYCFC planning consultations.

3. Access to system-wide processes, programs and supports

A key component of the Hamilton OEYCFCs plan is the commitment to city-wide programs, processes, and protocols that ensure system-wide expectations for equitable access and high quality programming are met. The following section outlines Hamilton's commitment to developing, maintaining, and refining the following system-wide processes, programs, and supports:

- Ensuring quality early years programs and services;
- Supporting professional learning and development;
- Maintaining system-wide data and monitoring protocols, supports, and resources;
- Developing strategies to engage key stakeholders; and,
- Creating mechanisms for the coordination of programs and the system-wide processes, programs, and supports.

Commitment to Quality

Ontario and Hamilton's shared vision for the early years is that children and families are well supported by a system of responsive, high-quality, accessible, and increasingly integrated early years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development. High quality is one of the guiding principles set out in the OEYCFC planning guidelines. The City is expected to ensure OEYCFC programs and services are *"designed to foster positive outcomes and support nurturing relationships for children, parents, and caregivers based on the latest evidence and research."*²³ It is the Ministry's expectation that priority is placed on the planning, management, and delivery of consistent, high quality core services.

The City of Hamilton is committed to ensuring that high quality OEYCFC programs and services are available to all children and their parents and caregivers. Quality is one of the four system priorities of Hamilton's early years system. The purpose of the quality assured priority is to facilitate early childhood educators in developing high-quality programs that support children, parents, and the early years environment, and to work toward achieving goals for children's learning, development, health, and well-being. The City will encourage, support, and ensure high quality OEYCFC programs and services through the following mechanisms:

- OEYCFC operator selection criteria will consider whether an organization has the capacity to deliver high quality early years programs that align with the pedagogical approach described in HDLH.
- OEYCFC operators will be required (as part of their service agreement) to participate in the Hamilton Early Years Quality Program.²⁴ As a participant of the quality program, operators will be expected to:
 - Recruit and retain highly skilled and qualified educators;
 - Participate in local quality initiatives;
 - Create a program statement that is consistent with the Ministry policy statement on programming and pedagogy;
 - Use HDLH as the framework to guide and develop early years programs;
 - Provide developmentally appropriate and evidence-based learning environments, resources, and curriculum; and,
 - Work with the City of Hamilton to identify quality goals and develop an action plan.
- To support OEYCFC operators in their participation in the Hamilton Early Years Quality Programs, the City of Hamilton will:
 - Continue to provide the quality framework
 - Provide professional learning opportunities that align with quality action plans;
 - Develop local quality initiatives based on best practices;
 - Monitor and work collaboratively with operators to ensure compliance; and,

²³ Ministry of Education. (July 2016). Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres. Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers. p. 5.

²⁴ Participation in the new quality program is mandatory for all licensed child care operators that currently have a funding agreement with the City of Hamilton. Starting in 2018, it will be mandatory for all OEYCFC operators as well.

- Promote opportunities to engage with various organizations, e.g. Affiliated Services for Children and Youth (ASCY), College of ECE, and Mohawk College.

There is a large amount of existing expertise across the local early years system. Hamilton's OEYCFC system will leverage expertise from key community partners (e.g., child care, school boards, Public Health Services, early identification programs/providers, and Indigenous and Francophone organizations) to ensure high quality child and family programs.

Supporting Professional Learning

Professional development and learning provides staff working in the early years sector with the understanding, knowledge, and skills they require to ensure high quality family support services and programs.

Hamilton's EYCP was based on the learning pedagogy as described in the provincial resource, HDLH. Hamilton OEYCFCs, as one core component of the early years system, will reflect the four foundations of learning as described in HDLH - belonging, wellbeing, engagement, and expression. HDLH positions the role of the educator as critical in helping children and families achieve these four foundations of learning. It is therefore essential to equip OEYCFC staff (educators) with the requisite understanding, knowledge and skills, and experiences to accomplish this.

On behalf of the City of Hamilton and for more than 20 years, ASCY has provided professional learning opportunities, resources, and leadership to the Hamilton early years community and beyond. ASCY has successfully fostered open pathways to professional learning and offered learning programs, resources, and events that support early years educators and other professionals working with children.

With the enhanced provincial expectations for the OEYCFCs comes the imperative to ensure staff working in family support programs have the understanding and competencies to achieve the learning goals outlined in HDLH, as well as the enhanced expectations around community outreach and making family connections. MEDU OEYCFC planning guidelines outline professional learning expectations, including ensuring that OEYCFC staff are provided with opportunities to remain informed of the latest research on adult education, child development, play- and inquiry-based pedagogy, and other relevant topics.

Hamilton's vision for OEYCFCs – based on consultation feedback – requires staff to have the capacity to: effectively reach out and form relationships with those families who do not currently access family support programs; support families by linking them to specialized services and supports as required, including schools; create friendly, welcoming environments for families with varying expectations, different backgrounds, and /or cultural and linguistic requirements; and, to incorporate adult education principles into their programming and practices.

Key staff in each centre will require the skills and knowledge to become OEYCFC ambassadors/greeters, community connectors, and outreach experts. As support to the CMSM, ASCY will develop and implement the core competencies and the professional learning curriculum that will enable OEYCFCs to fulfill these important functions.

Data Analysis and Outcome Monitoring

*Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework*²⁵ indicates that the MEDU will develop an early years outcomes and measurement strategy to best measure system effectiveness, including an outcomes framework, a data management approach, and a research plan. The City of Hamilton will be responsible for annual data reporting on defined measures of progress on the seven action areas (e.g., access, affordability, quality, and inclusion).

As part of the early years outcomes and measurement strategy, the MEDU included an *OEYCFC Outcome Framework* in the OEYCFC Planning Guidelines to support the implementation of OEYCFCs and to better understand and measure the impact that OEYCFC core services have to improve the lives of children and families in their community. The OEYCFC Planning Guidelines²⁶ describe this framework as including key indicators, output measures (e.g., number of children and parents/caregivers served), and outcome measures (e.g., percent of children identified as vulnerable by EDI domain) related to the core services that will be used to assess progress towards the desired program outcomes (e.g., child and parent/caregiver engagement, service integration, and program accessibility) and population outcomes (e.g., child and family wellbeing). The OEYCFC Business and Funding Guidelines²⁷ provide service data elements to monitor and track progress to demonstrate how the centres are meeting community needs. These data elements are the output measures referenced in the planning guidelines tracking service usage and staffing, along with adherence to the HDLH pedagogy.

In Hamilton's EYCP, the need for an early years evaluation and monitoring framework (see Strategic Priority #1: Quality, Evaluation and Learning) was also identified.²⁸ The City of Hamilton's Early Years Research Team will oversee the development of a local framework and ensure alignment with the Ministry's forthcoming early years outcomes and measurement strategy. To facilitate this alignment, the City of Hamilton would be pleased to provide expertise, input, and feedback on the MEDU's draft outcomes framework, proposed data management, and research approach.

The value added of an evaluation and monitoring framework, and the subsequent routine collection of data to inform the framework's indicators, is its ability to formalize and support reflective conversations among the various early years key stakeholders about the achievements made and the opportunities to

²⁵ Ministry of Education. (2017). Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework.

²⁶ Ministry of Education. (July 2016). Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers.

²⁷ Ministry of Education. (July 2018). Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Business and Funding Guidelines for Service System Managers.

²⁸ City of Hamilton. (September 2016). The Hamilton Early Years Community Plan 2016-2020.

learn,²⁹ strengthen, or revise programs and practices within the context of the broader early years system.

As part of this monitoring, it is recommended to be realistic about the capacity of the local early years system to demonstrate a direct, causal relationship between services and programs and population level outcomes (e.g., changes to child wellbeing). More specifically, the current early years data infrastructure – and its inability to track individual children and families through the system over time - will not support population-level correlations to draw conclusions about correlates of OEYCFC attendance with children’s higher well-being. It is also important to be realistic about the impact of child and family support programs (as a small component of a large early years system) on child and family wellbeing at a population level, unless usage rates represent a substantial proportion of the population of children and families. For these reasons, Hamilton recognizes the importance of ensuring that the local OEYCFC and early years outcome and evaluation framework incorporates the following elements:

- Quantitative, qualitative, and culturally sensitive indicators;
- Process related indicators (strong understanding of process supports outcome attribution);³⁰
- Short-term and intermediary indicators of progress towards desired outcomes;
- Mechanisms to capture a program/system’s contribution – rather than attribution - to the desired outcomes; and,
- Linked indicators at the child-, parent- and family-level to relate to program/system outcomes across the early years system, school entry, and longitudinal academic achievement (i.e. graduation, post-secondary/vocation entry).

Despite these limitations it remains important to monitor and evaluate the process, outcomes, and the progress towards outcomes for OEYCFCs as part of a broader early years system.

Local OEYCFC planning discussions (and earlier consultations for the EYCP) identified the need for data and information analysis and evaluation expertise to support the planning, implementation, and continuous improvement of Hamilton OEYCFCs. The following types of data infrastructure, information analysis and evaluation activities were identified:

- Develop easily accessible entry points to OEYCFC programs and services for parents and their children utilizing on-line platforms. Examples include, on-line registration processes, pre-registration through referral sources, automatic calendar populating (i.e., icalendar, google calendar, etc.), electronic parent notifications, etc.
- Continue to develop an understanding of who uses child and family support programs and who does not use them, and why, to inform outreach strategies.

²⁹ Ministry of Education. Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Business and Funding Guidelines for Service System Managers. July 2018.

³⁰ Torjman, S. and E. Leviten-Reid. (2003). Comprehensive Community Initiatives. Ottawa: Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

- Identification of neighbourhood assets (e.g. programs, services, resources, and landscape), needs, and priorities to inform each OEYCFC site's local neighbourhood engagement and outreach work.
- Ensuring feedback about the OEYCFC experience is sought from a variety of perspectives (e.g., child, parent/caregiver, staff, and community partners) and is included in program and system planning processes, including the voices of underserved populations or populations with unmet needs (especially those living in poverty).
- Developing the capacity to predict the supply and demand of child and family supports and programs.
- Evaluation of programs and supports to determine which components of OEYCFCs (i.e., outreach mechanisms, parent education approaches, and information and referral supports) are working, for whom and why.

To support the outcome monitoring and data-informed planning expectations outlined above, Hamilton's OEYCFC operators will be required to routinely collect process data, program output data, program outcome data, and pedagogical/quality and quality documentation in a systematic, standardized way. OEYCFC operators (and their staff) will also be expected to participate in knowledge transfer and exchange activities to support continuous quality improvement of their programs and services. Furthermore, to engage in the above data collection, analysis, and evaluation activities, OEYCFCs will require access to the expertise and resources of the City of Hamilton's Early Years Research Team.

The City of Hamilton recognizes that the above reporting expectations will require investment in the local OEYCFC information technology infrastructure as well as data management supports (such as, common and consistent data collection processes and protocols). Strengthening the early years data infrastructure was also identified as one of the key action steps under the Quality, Evaluation and Learning Strategic Priority in the EYCP.

Coordination of OEYCFC System

The Hamilton Early Years Community Plans 2016 – 2020 developed mechanisms to support the coordination and collaboration within the entire Hamilton early years system of services. The EYCP put in place a Collaborative Organizing Structure, designed to achieve shared goals and interests and move the system towards greater collective impact.

The Collaborative Organizing Structure includes the creation of Work Clusters that are designed to help advance EYCP priorities. In anticipation of the new OEYCFC system of services, the EYCP recommended the creation of the OEYCFC Work Cluster to coordinate and integrate the OEYCFC system of family support services and support the development of vibrant and responsive hubs of family support services located conveniently throughout the community. This OEYCFC Work Cluster will build upon the coordination and cooperation amongst operators that has evolved over the past decade and maintain

and strengthen these coordination mechanisms and processes in order to ensure high quality, responsive, consistent, and accessible programs and services across all OEYCFCs.

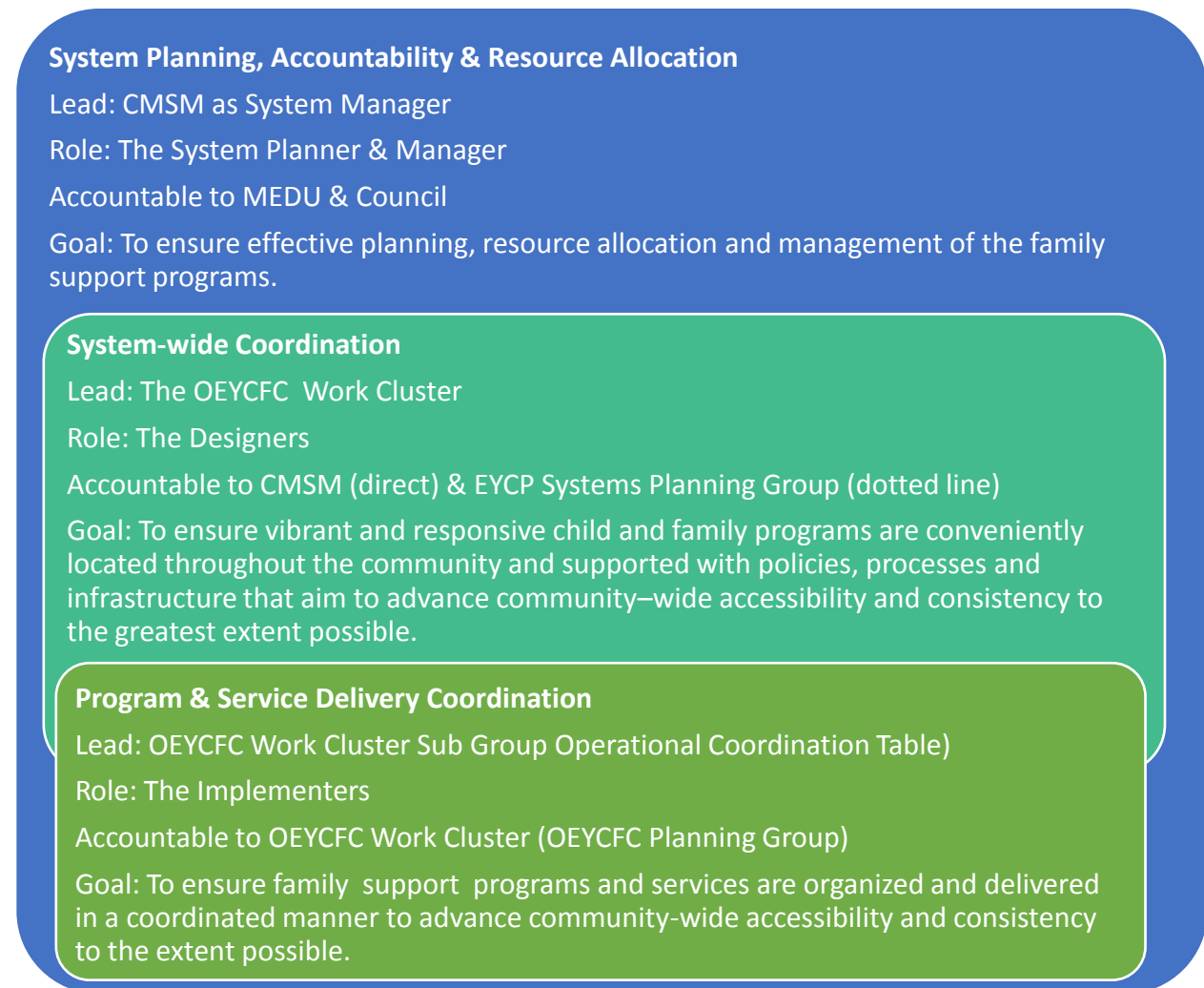
MEDU's OEYCFC planning guidelines include system planning, coordinating hours of operation, outcome reporting, and the implementation of *How Does Learning Happen* as key aspects of coordination. Other elements of coordination are locally derived and are specific to the Hamilton community based on what has been learned from families, caregivers, and key stakeholders. These include open pathways to inter-professional learning, support for engaging community partnerships, the Early Years Quality Program, city-wide outreach strategies, and as the system evolves, possible mobile services.

The overall planning, management, and accountability for the OEYCFCs is the responsibility of the City of Hamilton. However much of the coordination and integration work will be driven through the OEYCFC Work Cluster. The Hamilton OEYCFC conceptual model includes coordination mechanisms within three distinct but connected domains, which are:

- The CMSM - System planning, accountability, and resource allocation.
- THE OEYCFC Work Cluster - System-wide protocol, policy, and program coordination.
- The OEYCFC Work Cluster Sub Group - Service delivery coordination.

Figure 3 provides an overview of the focus and goals of these three coordinating mechanisms for Hamilton's OEYCFC system.

Figure 3. Coordination of Hamilton's OEYCFC System



The roles of these three coordinating groups or mechanisms will evolve overtime, expanding and changing membership to identify emerging trends and create opportunities for the OEYCFCs, community partners, and families to coordinate and streamline efforts to grow and learn together.

The OEYCFC Work Cluster will be established through the Early Years Plan Collaborative Organizing Structure. Once in place the Work Cluster will monitor the implementation of this plan and provide input to the City about the development of the system-wide coordination processes and mechanisms, as well as accessing the system-wide supports (e.g., professional learning, quality program, data analysis and outcome monitoring, and strategies to engage key stakeholders). The first tasks of this group will include:

- Communications about the new OEYCFCs;
- System level policies and plans for integrated program development;

- High-level coordination of partnerships (early years and beyond), including leveraging community hub opportunities;
- System-wide transitional human resources support; and,
- Inform the design and development of information technologies and management (systems-level).

The OEYCFC Work Cluster will create an operational sub-group or sub-cluster (Operational Coordination Table) that focuses on the coordination of programs and services. This group will focus on:

- Developing processes for system-wide operational coordination, such as hours of operation and which programs are available (and where and when);
- Coordination of on-site delivery of services by connected partners, community partnerships, and linkages (operational);
- Developing strategies for targeted outreach activities;
- Identification of system-wide information and referral needs (operational); and
- Informing the design and development of information technologies and management (operation).

The OEYCFC Work Cluster will also create a data and monitoring sub-cluster to develop an OEYCFC data and monitoring work plan including an IT infrastructure component.

Engagement of Key Stakeholders

A successful family support system will continually strive to engage key stakeholders in all aspects of its planning and service delivery. Engagement is a **two-way communication street** whereby stakeholders learn about family support programs and their importance and relevance for early childhood development, and at the same time inform the family support programs about how to make these programs viable, accessible, and meaningful. To that end, there will be system-wide processes aimed at communicating and engaging with four key stakeholder groups:

1. Key community partners
2. OEYCFC staff
3. Families and caregivers, and
4. Neighbourhood hubs and/or planning groups.

The overarching goal is to engage and maintain engagement on an on-going basis to ensure a responsive, high quality system of services for families. The focus, purpose, and functional lead for key stakeholder engagement work is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of Key Stakeholder Engagement for the Hamilton OEYCFC System

Key Stakeholder Group	Purpose and Focus	Lead Group(s)
Key Community Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To engage key partners in the planning and ongoing development of the OEYCFC system To foster and enhance community connections To ensure that OEYCFC programs and services collaborate with, but do not duplicate, existing community programs delivered by other organizations 	OEYCFC Work Cluster (OEYCFC Planning Group)
OEYCFC Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System-wide To engage staff from across all OEYCFCs in discussion about professional learning, coordination of program delivery, opportunities for collaboration with community partners, etc. 	OEYCFC Sub-Cluster (Operational Coordination Table) & OEYCFC Operators
Families and Caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System-wide: to develop system –wide tools and resources for family/caregiver engagement Each OEYCF develops a family and caregiver engagement strategy 	OEYCFC Work Cluster and/or Sub-Cluster (Operational Coordination Table) & OEYCFC Operators
Neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System-wide: to develop tools and resources to support OEYCFCs in engaging in neighbourhood outreach strategies OEYCFC: each OEYCFC will link to neighbourhood planning and/or hub development activities as appropriate 	OEYCFC Work Cluster and/or Sub-Cluster (Operational Coordination Table) & OEYCFC Operators

Part Four: The OEYCFC System – Building on Assets & Increasing Access

The overarching objective for Hamilton’s transition to OEYCFCs is to create a vibrant system of family support programs and services, and to eliminate the barriers that impede families from accessing these programs. The service delivery model, as described in the previous section, is designed to accomplish this. However, in addition to having a service model that focuses on delivering core and outreach services, it is also essential for the actual physical locations of OEYCFCs to be as geographically accessible as possible. Families identified the need for convenient locations as being as important as the programs and services themselves.

Currently, Hamilton’s family support programs are not geographically dispersed throughout the city in an equitable manner. As revealed during the needs assessment, some neighbourhoods/areas of the city are well served by networks of Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs) and Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs), while others are not.

The main OEYC sites have experienced very little change since their inception almost 15 years ago. There has been no additional provincial investment of funds to the OEYC sites since their creation in 2003. PFLCs – established in 2009/10 – are targeted programs and are generally located in neighborhood schools that are known to have demographic characteristics that are predictive of school difficulties.³¹ As a result, some PFLCs are situated in the same neighbourhoods as an OEYC, which has left little opportunity for family support programs to meet the changing demographic needs of the city's population. Currently, some areas experiencing high population growth (e.g., Binbrook, Winona, and parts of the Hamilton Mountain) are not well served, while there is a concentration of services in other areas of the city (e.g., lower city).

To address the current service gaps and duplications, one of the key objectives for Hamilton's OEYCFC system is to move towards a more equitable distribution of physical sites throughout the city. This makes the decisions around the geographic distributions of OEYCFCs one of the most critical planning tasks.

There are two critical planning decisions to be made. The first is to identify the **number and broad geographic location of OEYCFCs** that are required to provide as much equitable access as possible throughout the city, given the service expectations and the available resources/funding. The second decision is to determine the best way to **achieve this equitable distribution** of family support services throughout Hamilton.

1. Number and broad geographic locations of OEYCFCs required to achieve a more equitable distribution of services throughout Hamilton

Based on an analysis of Hamilton's population demographics and the existing system of family support programs, as well as the feedback from parents and caregivers received during consultations, creating more equitable access to family support programs across the city was agreed upon as the overarching goal for Hamilton's transition to OEYCFCs.

To achieve this, the Hamilton OEYCFC planning process established a neighbourhood-based approach to determining the geographic locations for OEYCFCs. Mapping existing OEYC sites and PFLCs revealed that many neighborhoods and areas of Hamilton are serviced by full service sites as well as satellite sites. Other Hamilton communities have no physical site or very limited access to programs and services. To achieve a more equitable distribution of family support programs and services, it was determined that full service OEYCFCs must be created in areas that are currently underserved and that some of the existing satellite sites will need to be phased out over time.

³¹ Underwood, K and Trent-Kratz, M. (2015). *Contributions of School-Based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres in an Early Childhood Service System*. School Community Journal, 2015, Vol. 25, No. 1

The approximate locations (i.e., neighbourhoods) for future OEYCFCs were identified by the OEYCFC Planning Group via a neighbourhood-level mapping exercise. Potential broad geographic locations for future OEYCFC sites were identified based on a review of existing and planned physical assets in the neighbourhood (e.g., existing family support program sites, schools, recreation centres, major service delivery centres), as well as additional information about the local population (e.g., economic development, population indicators, school utilization rates, family support utilization rates, current and planned transportation infrastructure). See the full Needs Assessment document for further details. The results of this mapping exercise will inform decisions about the future OEYCFC site locations.

The mapping exercise, and additional planning group and City of Hamilton discussions, led to the determination that Hamilton needs approximately **15 to 20 OEYCFC sites** in order to achieve its objective of a more equitable distribution of programs and services across the city. The current level of provincial funding for OEYCFCs means ***some of these sites will be full-time and others will be part-time. All sites will offer the full range of core programs and services.***

2. How to achieve this more equitable distribution of programs and services

Creating the network of 15 to 20 more equitably distributed OEYCFCs throughout the city will mean building on each neighbourhood's available assets (i.e., existing full service family support programs) as well as seeking out opportunities to enhance the availability of programs in those neighborhoods that currently have limited or no access to family support programs (i.e., new capital builds, new partnerships, etc.).

Building on the existing assets

Over the past 15 years, considerable resources (both municipal and provincial) have been invested in the existing main OEYCs. There are six existing main OEYCs in Hamilton that are providing a wide range of family support programs and services relatively close to the MEDU's expectations for mandatory OEYCFC core services. These existing main OEYCs also have satellite sites that have evolved in an attempt to meet their communities' evolving and emerging needs ***without an expansion*** of base operating funding.

In alignment with the MEDU's expectations,³² Hamilton already has an OEYC operator providing cultural and linguistic services for Francophone families, as well as an OEYC operator providing cultural and linguistic services for Indigenous families.

These main OEYC centres, and the programs serving Francophone and Indigenous families, have served the families in these neighbourhoods well and have established relationships with many community

³² The MEDU OEYCFC planning guidelines indicate that areas designated under the *French Language Services Act* (FLSA) must provide French OEYCFC programs and services. The guidelines also state that CMSMs must also provide family support programs and services that reflect local Indigenous cultures, as determined through local service planning and engagement with parents and caregivers.

partners. The operators of these centres are long-established and well-respected community organizations. See the needs assessment section (Part Two) for further description of the unique strengths of Hamilton's OEYC's.³³

Hamilton's PFLCs are operated by the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board. Both school boards recently determined that they will no longer operate PFLCs after June 2018 because the MEDU will no longer be funding school boards directly for this service. The school boards remain critical partners in planning and implementing Hamilton's transition to OEYCFCs. The City of Hamilton is committed to maintaining existing PFLC services until June 2018 and is working closely with both school boards to minimize any disruptions to families and staff. The City is also committed to examining existing and new opportunities to locate future OEYCFCs in schools, based on neighbourhood characteristics and infrastructure.

Give the above it was determined that Hamilton's OEYCFC system will build on the ***existing six main OEYC's, as well as the Francophone and Indigenous OEYC's***. More specifically, the initial phase (2018) of implementing the OEYCFC system will build on the following OEYC sites and programs:

- Beasley Community Centre
- Hamilton East (45 Ellis Ave.)
- Hamilton Mountain (Helen Detwiler Elementary School)
- Hamilton West (155 Queen St. North)
- Stoney Creek (St. David Catholic Elementary School)
- Waterdown (315 Dundas St. East)
- Indigenous OEYC services
- Francophone OEYC services

These sites and programs have the capacity to offer the core programs and services and meet the expectations and standards of the new system. The operators of these programs have expertise, capacity, neighbourhood relationships and city-wide partnerships that create a strong foundation upon which to establish the new OEYCFC system of family support programs.

Hamilton's current system of family support programs will primarily remain status quo from January to June 2018 to allow for transition planning and the local PFLCs to complete a full school year of programming. During this initial development phase, opportunities to incorporate the strengths and expertise of PFLCs into the local OEYCFC system will be explored.

During 2018, and possibly beyond, there may also be situations in which some OEYC satellite sites continue to operate serving as outreach programs, connecting and supporting families to participate in the OEYCFCs.

³³OEYC's were identified as having the following strengths: year round operating calendar and extensive hours of operation; comprehensive nature of programs and services offered; more geographically dispersed distribution of Centres; and strong linkages to a wide range of community-based services.

Planning to Enhance Access to OEYCFCs

In addition to the sites described above, it is anticipated that there will be enhanced access to OEYCFCs throughout the city. It is planned that once the new OEYCFC system is completely operational there will be 15 to 20 sites in total. These sites will be planned and phased-in over time based on site, operator and resource availability. The City of Hamilton will determine the actual physical site, or sites, to be considered as OEYCFC locations within each of these 15 to 20 geographic areas.

When selecting specific sites for future OEYCFCs, the City will consider two **system-wide conditions**. First, it is important that physical sites/locations have the **ability to meet the needs of Hamilton's diverse population of children and families**. Second, it is important that sites are representative of a **range of settings across the city** – i.e., aiming for a mix of centres located in schools and other community sites. Site selection will also consider new capital build proposals for schools that present an opportunity to incorporate new OEYCFC facilities.

For each **OEYCFC site** the City of Hamilton will select the best location based on the following criteria. Sites must:

- Support **easy family access** (i.e., located in close proximity to families and areas of higher population density);
- Support **neighbourhoods** (i.e., location reflects community needs and priorities);
- Support **community and service provider connections** (i.e., site enables connections to other early years services as well as broader community services, such as before and after school programs, recreation programs, FDK, and child care);
- Meet **physical requirements** (i.e., applicable access and safety standards as well as designated space requirements); and,
- Meet **operational requirements** (i.e., ability to offer full-time, flexible hours of operation such as daytime, evenings, and weekends).

In addition to site selection there will be opportunities to engage new operators and partners in the delivery of family support programs in Hamilton. Each operator both new and existing must:

- Be a not-for-profit organization;
- Demonstrate financial and organizational viability and sustainability;
- Pay staff a Living Wage;
- Have the capacity to deliver high quality early years programs that align with the pedagogical approach described in *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*;
- Have the capacity, knowledge, and expertise to address the diverse needs of all children, parents, and caregivers (i.e., value added services offered by the organization and existing relationship with the community being served);
- Have the ability and demonstrated commitment to work in partnership with other early years and community partners;
- Agree to participate in the Hamilton Early Years Quality Program (beginning in 2018);

- Have the human resources/staff capacity (i.e., competencies, skills and expertise) to deliver the expectations of the new service delivery model.

Part Five: Key Transition Tasks

Hamilton's family support program system will primarily remain status quo from January to June 2018. Discussions will be held with the existing OEYC operators and planning will begin for enhancing access in neighborhood currently underserved. Programs and services in these neighbourhoods will be phased-in over time based on site, operator and resource availability.

Starting in the fall of 2017, the City of Hamilton will develop and initiate a process for site and operator selection and confirmation. This process will be designed to ensure that each OEYCFC site meets the physical criteria as outlined Section Four. It will also ensure that selected OEYCFC operators meet the system design criteria, expectations of the service delivery model, and respond to the unique requirements of the neighbourhood(s) they intend to serve. Please see Section Four for further description of the operator selection criteria.

Key Transition Tasks #1: Building on Existing OEYCs

In the fall of 2017 working with the six existing OEYC sites and the two programs serving the Francophone and Indigenous populations (as described in the previous sections), the City will begin the transition to OEYCFCs. The process will consist of the following activities:

- Meet with each of the operators of these family support programs³⁴ to clarify the new expectations of the OEYCFC system and confirm the core components of the new service delivery model (including outreach and incorporating the strengths of the PFLC model).
- Undertake an assessment of the long-term suitability and viability of each operator's current physical main site(s) as per the site selection criteria and considerations outlined in Part Four. Opportunities to ameliorate any site and physical space shortcomings will be addressed on a site-by-site basis.
- Work closely with the lead Indigenous early years program provider (Niwasa and the concurrent *Journey Together* planning process) and the lead French-language early years program provider (Centre de santé communautaire) to ensure that their sites are viable and meet the expectations of the service delivery model, as well as the needs of the specific communities these OEYCFCs are designed to serve.

³⁴ Centre du santé communautaire, Hamilton East Kiwanis Boys and Girls Club, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Child Care Inc., Niwasa, Today's Family, Wesley Urban Ministries.

The above review and assessment process will lead to the creation of new OEYCFC Service Agreements with each of the six operators by January 2018 and the operationalization of eight OEYCFCs in 2018.

During this process, the City will work with the current OEYC operators to develop specific transition plans for their satellite program/sites. Transition plans may include transferring the programming to an identified full-service OEYCFC site, developing outreach strategies to help families access the new OEYCFCs, and/or providing temporary programming at the site based on the needs of the neighbourhood and resource availability.

Key Transition Task #2: Enhancing Access Throughout the City

In the fall of 2017 the City will begin planning for the site and operator selection in those neighbourhoods that are currently underserved or have limited/no access to family support programs. This will be a phased-in approach.

In areas that have been identified as needing enhanced access to family support programs and where there are anticipated school capital building projects that could house OEYCFCs, the City will work with the respective school board to plan and develop the OEYCFC site. It is anticipated that several of these capital projects will take at least two to three years to complete. In these situations, the City may also look for temporary sites to house OEYCFC programs and services in the interim with the intent of moving the program to the new/retrofitted school once construction is complete. In areas that are currently underserved and where there are no identified school capital building opportunities, the City will seek to identify potential community based OEYCFC sites.

The specific OEYCFC site planning process and timing may vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood depending on the local population's needs, community assets, and available infrastructure. The general steps in this process include:

- The City of Hamilton reviews and assesses potential sites in the neighbourhood, considering both existing sites (e.g., existing part-time family support program sites, schools, recreation centers, and community centres) and potential new sites that are in the planning stages of development (e.g., new schools and community hubs).
- The City of Hamilton may seek input from key community partners to determine the viability of sites as required on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood basis.
- The City of Hamilton will select the most appropriate site.

Where no obvious site is available or where two or more potential sites exists (i.e., multiple sites meet the site selection criteria), the City may organize an Expressions of Interest (EOI) process that will include both site and operator selection.

Once a site and an operator have been selected the City and the operator will enter into an OEYCFC Service Agreement. Each new OEYCFC site will be operationalized over time based on site and operator resource availability.

Once fully developed it is envisioned that there will be an OEYCFC system of at least 15 to 20 coordinated sites, some operating full time and others operating part time, providing families throughout the city with access to quality family support program and services.

Key Transition Task # 3: Minimizing Disruption for Families

In some neighbourhoods currently served by PFLCs or satellite OEYC sites there will be changes in where families go to access family support programs. During this transition period the City and providers of family support programs will work to minimize the disruption to families.

All PFLCs will remain operational through to June 2018. The City of Hamilton will work with the PFLC programs and the existing OEYC operators to develop neighbourhood-specific transition and communication plans. Plans may include developing outreach strategies to help families access the new OEYCFC and/or providing temporary, transitional programming based on the needs of the neighbourhood and resource availability.

In areas where there are satellite OEYC programs, operators and program staff will work closely with families to support their participation at the full service OEYCFC. In some instances, the transition plan may include keeping the satellite site operating for a period of time to inform families about the OEYCFC. The operators will develop an understanding about the barriers families perceive and/or experience and will work with families to minimize disruption and ameliorate access problems.

Key Transition Task #4: Establish the Coordination Mechanisms

The City of Hamilton will establish the coordinating and system-wide supports that will integrate the OEYCFCs and other community partners into a network of family support programs, making services as accessible and seamless as possible for children and their families.

The City will establish the OEYCFC Work Cluster (as described in Part Three): a component of the Hamilton Early Years Collaborative Organizing Structure. The existing OEYCFC Planning Group (the group that oversaw the development of this plan) will transition to the OEYCFC Work Cluster. Terms of Reference will be developed and membership will expand to include new partners and stakeholders. This new collaborative structure will be established in 2018.

One of the critical transition tasks for the OEYCFC Work Cluster will be to work with the CMSM to communicate the changes to program staff and families.

Conclusion

Hamilton's OEYCFC Initial Plan was developed with respect for the past and with an eye to the future. Building upon the voices of Hamilton's children and families, the information about early learning and

development as described in *How Does Learning Happen?*,³⁵ and over a decade of work conducted by local family support programs, this plan is designed to create a system of services and programs aimed at “contributing to healthy development today and stronger futures tomorrow”³⁶ for all children and families in Hamilton.

The Hamilton OEYCFC Initial Plan provides a vision for a well-connected and responsive system of family support programs equitably located throughout Hamilton. The decisions, processes, and mechanisms outlined in this plan were designed specifically to foster meaningful connections at the system level: the strong partnership and collaborative undertakings that will build Hamilton’s capacity to enhance learning, development, and well-being for all children and their families. The proposed OEYCFC system, and the broader early years coordinating structure it is part of, enables diverse system partners, champions, and connectors to work, learn, and grow together.

³⁵ Ministry of Education. (2014). *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*.

³⁶ Ministry of Education. (2013). *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework*.