

TERMS OF REFERENCE

NORTH REGION: LOCAL BEST START NETWORKS THUNDER BAY DISTRICT REVISED NOVEMBER 21, 2006

GOAL

Children in Ontario will be ready and eager to achieve success in school by the time they start Grade 1.

MANDATE

To plan, implement and monitor Best Start at the local level in accordance with the Implementation Planning Guidelines for Best Start Networks.

SCOPE

Best Start will create a comprehensive integrated system of services that supports families with children from birth through the transition into school. The scope of the initiative is intended to be as broad as possible for this age range, covering the spectrum of health, education, social supports and children's services.

PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles should be followed in the planning for Best Start:

- Simplified access
- Integrated services
- Partnership with parents and families
- Community driven
- Flexible and responsive
- Cross-ministerial
- Quality services

OBJECTIVE

Best Start is designed to give Ontario's children the best possible start in life and help them achieve success in school. To achieve this objective, the Best Start plan will:

- help parents support their children
- help children in Ontario to be ready to learn when they start Grade 1 and achieve success in school
- help make the transition to Grade 1 as smooth, seamless and successful as possible for children and their families
- make high quality early learning and care available
- help parents by providing a variety of parenting supports

- help identify and provide support to children who need extra help
- build on partnerships with communities and with the federal and municipal levels of government

KEY ACTIVITIES OF NETWORK

- **Best Start networks will:**
 - Bring together community partners
 - Provide an overview of Best Start
 - Develop terms of reference
 - Identify mechanisms to build partnerships with parents
 - Establish clear accountability
 - Describe the Best Start network

TIMELINES

Task 1 Build Best Start Networks

Deliverable:

Best Start network terms of reference.

Due Date:

September 30, 2005

Task 2

Develop a Transition Plan to Increase Licensed Child Care Spaces and Subsidies in 2005-06 with Priority for Children in JK and SK during Non-school Hours and Gradual Expansion of Licensed Child Care and Subsidies for Children Aged 0-4 Years

Deliverable:

Transition plan to use existing vacant child care spaces to increase the number of child care spaces for families with priority for children in JK and SK and gradual expansion for children aged 0-4 years, and identify any capital planning required for renovations to accommodate additional spaces for 2005/06 and any out year infrastructure projects that can begin in 2005-06. Please note CMSMs/DSSABs are being asked to develop the transition plan on behalf of the Best Start networks.

Due Date:

October 31, 2005

Task 3

Develop a Phase 1 Integrated Implementation Plan

Deliverable:

Full implementation plan that outlines the community's vision for Best Start and its proposed multi-year roll out

Due Date:

December 31, 2005

ACCOUNTABILITIES

The local Best Start implementation plans will integrate services funded by a number of different ministries and provided by a number of different agencies. This means that all members of the Best Start network will have **shared accountability** for integrating services and making sure that they work together to achieve Best Start goals.

Best Start networks will also be responsible for providing recommendations to the MCYS with regard to:

- **the steps required** to integrate planning for Best Start services and to develop the overall integrated Best Start plan
- the mechanisms **to be adopted** to ensure accountability for participating in Best Start and integrating services (e.g., service agreements, memorandums of understanding)
- the mechanisms **to be used** to monitor implementation of Best Start
- the mechanisms **for resolution** of any conflict between members' accountability to their program funders and their accountability to the Best Start network.

The Best Start Network will have an internal accountability mechanism in the form of a self-assessment that the Network will conduct annually to assess:

- Achievement of objectives and outcomes
- Membership and participation of all members
- Adequacy of the established Terms of Reference

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities of Best Start partners are defined in Appendix A to the Terms of Reference.

The successful implementation of Best Start depends on six important factors:

- coordinated community planning
- clear accountability
- integration of services and support at the community/neighbourhood level
- restoration and expansion of services of Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC), Preschool Speech and Language (PSL), and Infant Hearing Programs (IHP), as well as services for children with special needs
- expansion of quality child care in integrated settings
- availability of funding.

For these reasons, the roles and responsibilities of the various partners may be redefined or altered at the local planning tables.

MEMBERSHIP

The Local Best Start networks reflect the unique composition of each community and a broad range of community perspectives. All participants are able to make decisions on behalf of the organization and/or sector they represent. **There is flexibility with regard to consulting with and obtaining required representation from non-core members in recognition of urban/rural differences.**

Core Members of local Best Start Network Steering Committee are:

- CMSMs/DSSABs*
- MCYS *
- District School Boards and School Authorities*
- Public Health Units/Preschool Speech and Language*
- MCYS Service System Management Table Representative (1)
- Parents (2)
- Aboriginal Representatives (2)
- Francophone Representative
- Ontario Early Years Centres (2)
- Family Resource Programs (2)
- Child care Programs (2)

(*Required signators)

Advisory Committees

- Parents/Advisory Groups
- Health Care Programs
- MCYS Service System Management Table
- Healthy Early Years Committees
- Child care services (including child care operators)
- Aboriginal services
- Francophone Best Start Network

Sub-groups for consultation/input to the Best Start plans are:

- MOHLTC
- Early Learning Programs/Early Years Centres/Family Resource Programs
- Preschool programs
- Local Health Integration Networks
- Community Health Centres
- Family Health Teams
- Family Counselling Centres/Family Services

- Recreation Programs
- Services for francophones
- Libraries
- Business Sector
- Children's treatment services
- Children's mental health services
- Child health networks
- Child protection services (includes Children's Aid Societies)
- Universities and Colleges that offer Early Childhood Education Programs
- Primary care providers/paediatricians
- Preschool Speech and Language Services
- Multi-cultural services as appropriate
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services Regional Office (ex officio)
- Ministry of Education District Offices
- Other

STRUCTURE OF THE COMMITTEE

The successful implementation of Best Start depends upon coordinated community planning. Due to practical considerations concerning size of the Network, geographic dispersion of members, and varying degree of involvement or responsibility in planning, funding, implementing and administering Best Start-related services and programs, the role of the broad Thunder Bay District Best Start Network is by necessity primarily consultative. Network members will be consulted primarily through interviews, submissions, mail, survey, discussion papers, sectoral strategic planning meetings and similar mechanisms throughout the planning process to ensure service coordination and transparency.

Steering Committee

Day-to-day activities and detailed planning conducted by or on behalf of the Network will be guided by a steering committee composed of the following members (required signators to the District Best Start Implementation Plan prior to TBDSSAB and MCYS approval):

- one representative from each District school board (Director of Education or designate),
- one representative from TBDSSAB (General Manager or designate),
- one representative from MCYS (Regional Program Manager or Program Supervisor),
- one representative from the Public Health Unit (Director or designate)
- one representative from pre-school speech and language
- the Best Start Project Manager (TBDSSAB employee).
- MCYS Service System Management Table Representative (1)
- Parents (2)
- Aboriginal Representatives (2)

- Francophone Representative (Francophone Best Start Network Liaison)
- Ontario Early Years Centres (2)
- Family Resource Programs (2)
- Child care Programs (2)

Chairperson

The Chair of the Best Start Network and the Best Start Network Steering Committee shall be the General Manager (or designate) of TBDSSAB.

Member Selection and Tenure

Broad Network membership selection is open, to be confirmed by invitation of the Steering Committee via the Steering Committee Chair. Membership is open to all interested parties with a reasonable degree of formal involvement in parenting, children's services, child care, or primary education.

Steering Committee membership is as mandated by MCYS and individual members are to be approved by the Steering Committee Chair. Steering Committee members must be invested with sufficient decision-making authority within their organization to facilitate the efficient conduct of committee business and meet stringent planning deadlines. Individual membership is non-transferable without permission of the Steering Committee Chair.

Individual members retain their membership indefinitely, subject to annual renewal of the Best Start Network and Steering Committee Terms of Reference by TBDSSAB in June of each year, and subject to continued tenure with the organization that they represent.

The Network and Steering Committee may be dissolved at any time through resolution of TBDSSAB or upon written instruction from MCYS.

Meetings

The Steering Committee will meet as required for the duration of the first three years.

The Network or subcomponents of the Network will meet as required for planning and/or service coordination purposes.

Linkages/Network Representation/Planning Coordination

Staff of TBDSSAB and/or a bilingual member of the Network will represent the Network to Regional French Language Networks as required.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Every effort will be made to achieve consensus in decisions of the Steering Committee. In the unlikely event that reasonable efforts have been unable to produce consensus, decisions will be made by simple majority vote. All votes will be recorded votes. In the case of a tie, the Chair will be accorded an additional tie-breaking vote. Any member may request a recorded vote on an issue where consensus is not apparent. Voting is otherwise at the discretion of the Chair, and consensus will be assumed in the absence of a recorded vote. Steering committee members may request that the MCYS Regional office be consulted on any disputed resolution.

Meetings will be conducted in general accord with the principles governing TBDSSAB Board meetings, and within the spirit of related TBDSSAB bylaws and related governance resolutions.

Steering Committee Quorum

Seven members of the Steering Committee including the Chair must be present to establish quorum. Informational meetings may be held if quorum is not achieved. Votes or signatures to allow completion of business may be obtained through correspondence if necessary, upon authorization of the Chair.

SIGNATURES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference must be signed by (at a minimum) representatives of the CMSM/DSSAB, MCYS Regional Office, Ministry of Education District Office, relevant District School Boards, and Public Health. Other parties to be included as deemed appropriate at the local level.

SIGNATURES TO THE BEST START PLAN

The Integrated Best Start Plan must be signed by (at a minimum) CMSM/DSSAB, MCYS Regional Office, relevant school boards and Public Health.

APPENDIX A

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED WITH BEST START

There are a number of stakeholders that are involved in Best Start, from a policy/support perspective to a service delivery role. For discussion of accountability, please refer to page 20. The following is a listing of some of the key stakeholders with a description of their distinct roles and responsibilities.

Parents

Parents and children – families -- are at the heart of Best Start. Parents, guardians and other family caregivers will, at a minimum, be given the opportunity to:

- help identify their children’s strengths and needs
- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- provide advice on the best way to organize and integrate services
- participate in screening programs
- provide nurturing, stimulating home environments
- become informed about the services available and the importance of early learning and care
- make choices about the services they need for their children.

Policy Makers/Funders

The **Ministry of Children and Youth Services** has overall responsibility for Best Start. At the Corporate level, MCYS will:

- provide leadership provincially
- develop the overall vision for Best Start and policies, practices and funding models to support planning and implementation
- provide funding for a wide range of child and youth services
- develop planning frameworks and guidelines
- identify and support demonstration communities
- liaise with other government ministries whose services link with Best Start
- liaise with other levels of government that provide funding for early learning and child care programs (i.e., federal government, municipal governments)
- review community plans
- partner with other levels of government to provide funding for Best Start components
- be accountable for the components of Best Start that it funds directly, and be accountable for the successful coordination and integration of services funded by other ministries and other levels of government.

* Refers to both local networks and the regional French-language networks

The **MCYS Regional Offices** will:

- provide leadership/champion Best Start in their region
- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- interpret ministry policy for the community
- review and approve community plans, including capital plans, and make recommendations to corporate office
- liaise with other ministries at regional level
- license child care programs in the region
- monitor implementation of Best Start
- provide feedback to corporate office on the strategy
- respond to local issues that require resolution

The **Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care** funds a number of services for young children, including primary, secondary and tertiary health services provided by physicians and other specialists in both hospital and community settings, like immunization and prevention programs offered by public health units. At the Corporate level, MOHLTC will:

- facilitate implementation of Best Start
- support the overall vision for Best Start, and its policies, practices and funding models
- liaise closely with MCYS, and play a key role in communicating with the health sector
- assist in identifying and resolving planning and implementation issues (e.g., identifying effective ways to coordinate services for children with special needs, identifying ways to involve primary care providers in the 18-month well baby screen and compensate them for their services)
- be accountable for the ongoing provision of the health services required by young children

The **MOHLTC Regional Offices** will:

- provide leadership within the health sector in their region
- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- interpret ministry policy for the community
- facilitate the participation of children's treatment and mental health services
- assess the impact of proposed plans on health services in the region
- assist in resolving local issues
- identify health-related issues that must be addressed provincially.
- recognize that the concept of primary and specialist care reflects a division of labour that occurs more in big cities than many rural areas.

* Refers to both local networks and the regional French-language networks

The **Ministry of Education** fully supports Best Start as an initiative that can enhance student success at school and will be an active partner in planning and implementing Best Start. At the Corporate level, EDU will:

- facilitate implementation of Best Start
- support the overall vision for Best Start, and its policies, practices and funding models
- liaise closely with MCYS, and play a key role in communicating with the education sector
- assist in identifying and resolving planning and implementation issues (e.g., services required to enhance the successful transition of children with special needs into school programs, links between Preschool Speech and Language and School Speech and Language Programs, the potential use of school resources, such as teachers, speech and language pathologists, to provide Best Start services)
- advise on, interpret and review education policies, legislation and curriculum to support Best Start
- review and approve capital plans for schools, and provide funding for capital costs for new school construction
- provide support for demonstration communities
- be accountable for the successful coordination and integration of early learning programs with JK/SK curriculum

The **EDU District Offices** will:

- provide leadership within the education sector in their districts
- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- interpret ministry policy and curriculum for the community
- facilitate the participation of school boards
- assess the impact of proposed plans on schools and school boards
- assist in resolving local issues
- identify issues that must be addressed corporately.

The **Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs)** are the child care service system managers and are responsible for coordinating municipal services, and for planning and funding child care and other services for children and youth (e.g., recreation programs) in their region. Municipal governments across Ontario provide funding for a number of programs and services for young children and their families, including child care services, public health programs, recreation programs and libraries. They are the designated service system managers for child care and are responsible for planning and managing the delivery of child care services at the community level. CMSMs/DSSABs will:

- provide leadership within the municipality for Best Start

* Refers to both local networks and the regional French-language networks

- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- play the lead role during Phase 1 in planning and implementing the expansion to child care services
- make sure that Best Start investments in child care are consistent with municipal child care plans
- provide links to other child and youth services in the community, such as recreation programs and libraries
- be accountable for the child care services in their municipality, and for coordinating and integrating other municipally funded services for young children and families, i.e. special needs resourcing
- develop and implement local Child Care Service Plans, and corresponding Child Care Infrastructure Plan, based on local community need following a planning process that engages Best Start networks. CMSMs/DSSABs must build on their existing plans as a basis for the planning for the Best Start expansion of child care spaces.
- be required to revise the existing Child Care Service Plans to address the requirement for the child care component under Best Start. The final revised Child Care Service Plan that includes the child care component of Best Start will be shared with the Best Start network prior to seeking Council approval.

School Boards

School Boards are responsible for implementing provincial education policies and curriculum and for providing education programs for children beginning in junior kindergarten. It is anticipated that they will:

- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- identify issues and opportunities in developing Best Start hubs and linking early learning and school-based programs
- assist in planning early learning and care hubs, child care programs located in schools and help to coordinate these programs with the Kindergarten Program
- identify issues that must be addressed to help children with special needs make a successful transition to school
- seek opportunities for expertise/resources to be shared with early learning and child care programs
- provide sites/space for Best Start neighbourhood learning and care hubs (when appropriate)
- identify issues related to the hub model in their districts (e.g., transportation)
- provide sites/spaces for expansion of child care

* Refers to both local networks and the regional French-language networks

Early Identification and Intervention Programs

Public Health Units are responsible for delivering Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) and other early years services, such as immunization programs, nutrition programs and school-based health programs. They will:

- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- provide information on child, family and population health and well-being of the community that can be used to guide Best Start programs
- identify ways to integrate health unit programs into Best Start
- continue to manage, deliver and be accountable for public health programs for young children (e.g., HBHC, immunization programs, child health programs).

Early Identification and Intervention Programs provide specialized programs for children, including Preschool Speech and Language, Infant Hearing Program, Infant Development, Children's Mental Health and Behaviour Management initiatives. They will:

- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- assist in identifying gaps and planning services
- develop strategies to link and integrate their services to the broader integrated system
- play an active role in delivering integrated Best Start services
- be accountable for managing and delivering quality services.

Early Learning and Care Programs

Child Care Services are responsible for providing early learning and care programs for child from infancy to 12 years. In Ontario, child care services are provided by a range of different organizations, including non-profit agencies, commercial operators, and they include both centre-based and home-based programs, and both regulated and informal programs. Although Best Start intends to improve quality in both the regulated and informal child care systems, Best Start will focus first on regulated centre-based and home-based child care services. Their role in Best Start is to:

- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- assist in identifying gaps and planning services
- work with the education system to integrate their learning program with the Kindergarten Program
- help parents become informed about Best Start services and how to access them
- play an active role in delivering Best Start services
- be accountable for managing and delivering quality child care services.

* Refers to both local networks and the regional French-language networks

Post-Secondary Education Programs, Regulatory Colleges and Professional Associations are responsible for providing the training, education, and standards of practice for those who deliver child and youth services and early learning and care programs. They will:

- participate in planning and implementing Best Start through the Best Start networks*
- identify best practices in service delivery and service integration
- identify any gaps in knowledge, skills and education, as well as HR issues
- be accountable for developing and providing education and other programs to support Best Start.

The successful implementation of Best Start depends on six important factors:

- coordinated community planning
- clear accountability
- integration of services and support at the community/neighbourhood level
- restoration and expansion of services of Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC), Preschool Speech and Language (PSL), and Infant Hearing Programs (IHP), as well as services for children with special needs
- expansion of quality child care in integrated settings
- availability of funding

For these reasons, the roles and responsibilities of the various partners may be redefined or altered at the local planning tables.

* Refers to both local networks and the regional French-language networks