

THUNDER BAY DISTRICT
BEST START NETWORK

Terms Of Reference

SEPTEMBER 2008

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For the purposes of this document, the following words will be used as defined:

Parents: implies parents / guardians / caregivers / parents to be

Community: defined by geography / culture / language / shared interest

Children: includes prenatal to age 18

Thunder Bay District Best Start Network

Terms Of Reference

September 2008

Vision

Families in the Thunder Bay District will be well supported in preparing their children to achieve success in school and in life.

Mandate

To promote healthy childhood development by ensuring services are provided in flexible, creative and integrated ways.

Language

Internal Communication

English shall be the language of use for all internal correspondence via letter, newsletter, e-mail or other forms (print or electronic).

Correspondence

Responses to correspondence from the public shall be in the official language in which it was received (including correspondence by e-mail).

All official documents of the Network, such as the Terms of Reference, plans, reports or any other publicly circulated documents will be available in both official languages.

Scope

The Thunder Bay District Best Start Network will work to create and sustain a comprehensive integrated system of services that supports families with children in a way that is collaborative, co-operative, and respects the principles of community planning and parent engagement. The scope of the initiative will be as broad as possible, covering the spectrum of health, education, social supports and children's services in a way that is seamless, accessible and culturally appropriate.

Principles

The following Guiding Principles will be followed:

- Universal / Simplified access
- Cooperation / Coordination and Collaboration with potential for Integration / Fusion
- Partnership with parents , families and communities
- Respect for input of neighbourhoods and local communities
- Flexible and responsive
- Cross-ministerial / Multi-sectoral
- Quality services

Objectives and Accountabilities

Best Start is designed to give Ontario's children the best possible start in life and help them achieve their fullest potential.

This will be accomplished through the following five measurable objectives:

1. Plan, Monitor and Direct the Best Start Initiative

Through linkages with established sub-committees and other related groups, the Best Start Network will facilitate the creation of learning environments consistent with our vision. The Network will direct the planning process, monitor the level of integration, provide direction and oversee the Best Start initiative. The Regional Francophone Network and the Expert Panels will be used as references to the Network.

2. Ensure Parent Involvement

Capacity building and ongoing parent engagement will be the responsibility of the Hub Advisory Committees, coordinated by the Hub Coordination Committee and guided by the Best Start Network

3. Ensure Parent Support

Parents will be helped to provide nurturing and stimulating home environments through participation in established early learning programs, specialized services and schools.

4. Ensure the provision of High Quality Early Learning and Child Care Environments

The integration of family support programs, child care and kindergarten/schools will be directed, guided, overseen, supported and evaluated by the Best Start Network. These services will be available at Hubs and Best Start sites and coordinated by the Hub Coordination Committee in concert with established sub-committees and service providers.

5. Ensure Access to Seamless Specialized Services

Coordination of specialized services for each hub will be planned by the Hub Coordinating Committee in concert with the Specialized Services Committee. Access to specialized services will be monitored and evaluated by the Best Start Network.

Network Structure & Responsibilities

The Thunder Bay District Best Start Network has various components to ensure comprehensive planning, implementation and evaluation of the Network's vision (see Appendix I)

Best Start Senior Executive Group

This group is a resource to the Best Start initiative. It has no voting responsibilities. It represents funders and is a high level cross jurisdictional group whose responsibilities are to endorse and promote the work of the Best Start Network, to remove barriers to system integration and to advocate for the necessary resources to accomplish the Best Start vision.

Membership of the Best Start Senior Executive Group include:

Directors of Education
DSSAB Manager
Ministry of Children and Youth Services, designate
Ministry of Education, designate of Regional Officer
Medical Officer of Health
Chair of Best Start Network Committee

The Best Start Senior Executive Group will meet annually or as required.

Best Start Network

Guided by the Mandate and Principles, the members of the Network are expected to direct, plan, and operate the Best Start initiative at a system wide level on behalf of the organization/sector they represent. Network members will work under the influence of their funders and executives as well as the local advisory groups. They will be expected to make or approve recommendations.

Membership of the Network

Membership of the Network will be reviewed annually to ensure the appropriate representation.

Membership will include:

School Board Representatives

DSSAB Child Care Manager

Childcare Supervisors Network (2) – Chair and one other supervisor

LSSMT Representative (1)

Hub Coordination Committee Representatives (Chair and Co-Chair)

Services Committee (2 representatives – Chair and Co-chair)

Urban Aboriginal Advisory Committee (1)

Francophone Representative (1)

Communication / Marketing Subcommittee Representation - (1) - Chair

Evaluation Subcommittee Representative – (1) – Chair

MCYS representative with Best Start/Child Care Portfolio

Health Unit Representative (1)

- Representatives for each sector will be identified annually.
- A Parent representative will be chosen through a parent-driven process once Hub Advisory Committees are in place, with this individual representing parents of the Hub Advisory Committees.
- A membership declaration will be signed by each identified representative for a two year renewable term. This confirmation of membership is essential in determining quorum.
- The Best Start Network will meet quarterly or as required.

Responsibilities of Network Members

Members are expected to fully participate in all meetings (teleconferencing capacity will be available for meetings as requested). Members unable to participate in a meeting can identify an alternate who is able to represent their constituency.

Each member of the Thunder Bay District Best Start Network will be responsible to ensure the flow of information at the organization or sector they represent.

Chairmanship of Best Start Network

The Best Start Network will have both a Chair and a Vice-chair position. The Chair and the Vice-Chair will be elected every year to a maximum term of three years. An election of the chairmanship positions will customarily occur at the September meeting.

Responsibilities of the Chair:

- Plan and chair meetings

- Consult with the Vice-chair to prepare agendas
- Forward issues requiring resolution to MCYS Regional office
- provide a link to the Senior Executive Group
- Act as a spokesperson for the Best Start Network

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-chair will assume responsibilities of the Chair.

Decision-making process and dispute resolution:

Decision-making will be achieved through consensus. Under exceptional circumstances when consensus is not able to be achieved and there is consensus to vote on the matter, the vote will be determined by simple majority. If opposition is substantive then advisement of MCYS will be requested.

Issues that require resolution will be forwarded to MCYS Regional Office through the Best Start Chair.

Quorum for meetings will be 50% plus 1 of total number of registered members.

Information for decisions will be provided in advance of meeting times to ensure due consideration.

Annual review and evaluation:

The Network will implement mechanisms for self-assessment particularly regarding:

- Achievement of objectives and outcomes
- Membership and participation of all members
- Parental Input / perception of service
- Quality and consistency of service delivery

Network Committee(s):

In order to realize the Best Start vision practically and systematically, the Network will have standing committees that will have a specific function in the Best Start Initiative. Each committee will develop their own terms of reference that are aligned with the Terms of Reference of the Best Start Network. One standing committee of the Best Start Network will be the Hub Coordination Committee. Its mandate is to operationalize the Best Start Hub system and ensure a comprehensive integrated system of services that support families with children in a way that is collaborative, co-operative, and includes community planning and parent engagement.

The Hub Coordination Committee will be supported through Hub Advisory Committees (40% parents) that will provide Hubs with internal information, direction and evaluative feed back as community groups of parents and service providers.

Ad Hoc Committees will be established to complete specific time-limited tasks.

The Network will also use existing community groups as resources to ensure a full range of community participation in achieving its vision.