



	REPORT NO.: 2019-05
MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2018	DATE PREPARED: JANUARY 28, 2019
SUBJECT: CHILD CARE & EARLY YEARS ENGAGEMENT	

RECOMMENDATION

For Information Only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with updated information related to the targeted engagement of parents and caregivers of children aged birth to 6 years in the District of Thunder Bay.

BACKGROUND

The transition of all Ontario Early Years Centres and Child Care Resource Centres to EarlyON Child and Family Centres occurred in January 2018. The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) became the service system manager for EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

As a part of the initial plan submitted to Ministry of Education, a local needs assessment was used to inform an in-depth understanding of community needs as they relate to early years child and family programs. A parent survey was created to engage parents and caregivers while giving them the opportunity to provide feedback on current early years programs, services, operating hours, information and referral, and other important factors. Although TBDSSAB heard back from 280 families, the majority of the surveys were completed by families already accessing EarlyON Programs.

As a result, TBDSSAB developed an engagement plan for parents and caregivers of children aged birth to 6 years while also factoring in the need to target families from more diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

COMMENTS

In the District of Thunder Bay, engagement focused on parents and caregivers of children aged birth to 6 years with emphasis on collecting input from the Indigenous population. Engagement themes addressed affordability, access, quality and responsiveness of child care & early year services.

Engagement events began in April and continued through September of 2018. Sessions and events were held at a variety of times and venues to minimize barriers and to maximize participation (day, evening and weekends). Engagement themes and topics were based on the mail out survey questions.

The following outlines the methods of outreach and engagement and the target audiences:

1. Mail-Out Child Care and Early Years Survey
 - Random selection of households with one or more children aged 0-6 years
 - Input gathered on Child Care & Early Years Programs (hours, locations, access, etc.)
2. TBDSSAB Initiated Pop-Ups
 - A child-friendly opportunity for parents and caregivers
 - Child play area with supervision while parents talk about and complete survey questions
 - Intercity Mall, Victoriaville, Vickers Park
3. Community Events
 - TBDSSAB booth with engagement surveys and child-friendly attractions
 - TBDSSAB going to where the families are naturally congregating
4. Child Care Waitlist Survey
 - Targeting families currently on the childcare waitlist
 - Of Note:
 - 31.8% of people on the waitlist have a placement in licensed child care (home or centre)
 - 51.3% of people on the waitlist have been offered a space in a licensed child care centre, and 42.6% of people who were offered, refused it)
 - The main reason for refusal is location; the second reason for refusal is that it was not their preferred centre

Overview of Parent Feedback

The Child Care and Early Years engagement was completed by October 2018.

In total, 369 valid surveys were returned via online and community events. 225 of the surveys were from our target demographic of families with children between birth and age 6. The following table shows the number of surveys received from each form of outreach:

Source	Responses
Targeted Events	146
Online Responses	24
All Mail Out Responses (blank, demographics only surveys included)	199

Themes covered through responses to the survey and direct face-to-face conversations with parents and caregivers included:

- Receiving Fee Subsidy
- Child Care affordability
- Child Care scheduling
- Child Care and Early Years extended hours/availability
- Special needs services
- Child Care flexibility
- Attend Early Years Programs
- Where do you play
- Where do you get your information
- How important is location
- How important is environment
- How important is hours of operation
- How important are other families
- How important is transportation
- Access to information
- Indigenous programs

Next Steps

TBDSSAB Focus Groups

- Parents and caregivers who work non-traditional hours
- Parents and caregivers of children with special needs
- Francophone
- Indigenous

Administration is in the early stages of developing a Child Care and Early Years' Service System Plan for 2019- 2023. This Plan will identify key priorities including, but not limited to, program design and child care centre location – that are responsive to TBDSSAB's efforts at broader service system engagement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no direct financial implications from this Report as all costs related to the engagement were within the 2018 approved operating budget. However, the data provided through the parent and caregiver engagement will inform future programming decisions, which may have a financial impact. Any future financial implications will be presented to the Board for approval.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the targeted engagement of parents and caregivers of children aged birth to 6 years in the District of Thunder Bay provided valuable information that will be included in the TBDSSAB Child Care & Early Years' Service System Plan to be submitted to the Ministry of Education in June 2019.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None.

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