



June 7, 2017

Letter to the Community: Early Years System Partners and Parents/Caregivers

The Ministry of Education has announced its plan to move forward with integrating four child and family programs to create Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFC) across all municipalities in Ontario. The four provincially funded child and family programs to be integrated include:

- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
- Better Beginnings, Better Futures
- Child Care Resource Centres
- Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs)

Notably, Chatham-Kent currently receives funding for only one of the four programs referred to in the provincial OEYCFC planning guidelines, namely; Ontario Early Years Centres.

OEYCFCs represent the coming together of a variety of high quality child and family programs in accessible locations that are responsive to local need. Although Chatham-Kent already has Best Start Child and Family Centres/Hubs, there is always room for improvement. Transitioning to these new Child and Family Centres will allow the community to realign services in a way that will improve user access, satisfaction and outcomes for children. Funding allocations have not been announced by the Ministry of Education and so many decisions related to local centres will be in limbo until a budget is made available.

A key part of the provincial announcement was that Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) (municipalities) are required to plan and manage the delivery of core services in these new centres in keeping with provincial guidelines. This means the municipality must lead the planning process and manage the transformed system. Immediate responsibilities of the municipality in this role include ensuring that a preliminary OEYCFC plan is developed and submitted to the Ministry of Education by September 29, 2017. The municipality is working with the Chatham-Kent Children and Youth Planning Network (CYPN) (previously the Best Start Planning Committee) to ensure the development of a plan that truly reflects the needs of all families and communities.

The CYPN has developed a community engagement strategy to ensure that families, children, early years' service agencies and their staff have opportunities to inform the design of the system and reflect the specific needs of their community. Opportunities to provide input will be shared as the CYPN moves forward in the planning process.

Most importantly, current Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC) programs and services will remain in effect throughout the planning phase. As time passes, changes to OEYC hours of operation, program content and locations may be introduced. The CYPN is working closely with service providers to maximize opportunities for families to access the services they want and need, to customize services to improve outcomes for children and to minimize disruption throughout the transition period.

For additional details on these changes please refer to the OEYCFC Question and Answer document prepared by the CYPN. This document is available on the Municipal Children's Services and OEYC websites, at all Best Start Child and Family Centres and all OEYC program locations.

The Municipality of Chatham Kent and the Child and Youth Planning Network would like to thank you for your patience during this transition phase.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly Emery".

Kelly Emery
Chair, C-K Child and Youth Planning Network (CYPN)
Director, Children's Services Division
Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Child and Family Services Department