



# CHAPTER 1

## The Purpose and Scope of the Research Study

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### I. Introduction

#### How this research came about

This publication reports on the 1997 research study of Canadian family resource programs sponsored by the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs. The Case Studies Research Project was designed to learn more about the nature and scope of Canadian family resource programs by systematically examining the development and operation of fifteen established family resource programs serving diverse geographic and ethno-cultural communities from Newfoundland to British Columbia.

Family resource programs are increasingly being adopted by many communities as the program model of choice in primary preventive family support and health promotion strategies (Kyle, 1994). However, little information is available about their development, the full range of services they offer and their ongoing operation in Canada. Questions persist about the nature and scope of family resource programs and about their role in providing child care services, employment support programs and community economic development opportunities. There has also been little documentation of the kinds of linkages and partnerships family resource programs make with other community services. It is difficult to develop analytical frameworks that adequately capture the complexity and diversity of Canadian family resource programs, and this limitation further complicates discussions about their nature and scope.

The Case Studies Research Project builds on earlier work of the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (formerly TLRC Canada). In 1989, TLRC Canada published *Strengthening Families, Cherishing Children*, which included brief descriptions of over thirty Canadian family resource programs. While this publication offered a useful overview of family resource programs, it was limited in a number of respects. The program descriptions were submitted by the programs themselves; no common framework was followed, and no interviews took place to clarify information. As a result, information was not provided consistently, nor were the descriptions sufficiently detailed to capture such things as the program's development, the full range of services provided, or the extent of collaboration with other organizations. There was also only a limited attempt to systematically identify and analyze common characteristics, themes and issues. Nor was it possible to get a balanced distribution of programs from all parts of Canada. While it was a good start, this publication raised as many questions as it answered.

In 1994, the Association conducted an analysis of the responses of 552 family resource programs and related services to a detailed questionnaire asking for information about the kinds of program components they provided. Although the *1994 Status Report on Family Resource Programs Across Canada* identified a wide range of programs and services that were offered, it did not solicit any details about them. In concluding, the authors noted that: “while the family resource movement in Canada is dynamic and growing, there is not a core, shared base of knowledge developing out of the Canadian experience” (Kellerman and Williams, p. 30). In particular, many smaller, more isolated programs have limited opportunities to exchange information and ideas; they could benefit from learning more about how other groups have responded to concerns similar to their own. The report identified the pressing need for more research to construct a picture of the family resource movement as it is currently operating in Canada.

Among those working in the family resource field, there is concern about the general lack of public awareness as to what family resource programs are and how they work. Sometimes the program components and purposes of family resource programs are misunderstood, and programs often have difficulty making known the wider range of supports and resources they make available to families. For example, core services such as toy libraries and drop-ins are often dismissed as being concerned with children’s play (which is considered frivolous and readily expendable) rather than being recognized for their contribution to children’s cognitive development and social competence, and for offering a nurturing place where parents can learn about and practice their parenting skills.

Contributing to the general lack of public understanding is that, to date, there is no consensus about what terminology should be used, about who should be served or about what specific kinds of programs should be offered. Greater recognition and comprehension of family resource programs can only be achieved when practitioners develop common understandings about what they do, why they do it, and how they go about doing it.

## The Purpose of the Research

The present research seeks to address the current lack of information about Canadian family resource programs by reflecting on examples of the work that is presently being done in various parts of the country. Its purpose is to learn more about the nature and scope of Canadian family resource programs by conducting case studies of fifteen established programs chosen for their demonstrated innovative practice in responding to the child care and employment support needs of the families, children and communities they serve. More specifically, information has been collected about:

- how the programs first began, and how they have evolved over time
- the community context in which the programs work
- their mission statements, values and philosophy
- the range of program components they offer
- how the programs integrate various program components in order to offer holistic support to families
- the kinds of linkages programs make with other community groups and services
- their governance, organizational structure, and staffing
- their funding sources.

Additionally, program representatives—staff, and to a lesser extent, Board members, participants and community partners—were asked to identify some of the most important lessons they had learned about doing family support work, as well as some of the barriers they had encountered.

## The Research Questions

Based on the information gathered, an analysis was carried out to explore basic research questions about the nature and scope of family resource programs, including:

- What is a family resource program? Is it possible to come up with a definition that identifies common elements and incorporates basic principles, at the same time as it recognizes the need for flexibility and diversity, qualities that enable family resource programs to respond to varying family and community needs?
- What is the range of program components offered? Are there common program components?
- Is it possible to develop a framework that will organize and clearly articulate the complex range of program components identified?
- To what extent are there common organizational models?
- What role do child care services, employment support programs and community economic development initiatives play in family resource programs? What role might they play?
- What common issues and themes have program representatives identified that influence the way they think about and carry out their work?
- What lessons have they learned from their experience of developing and working in family resource programs?

## Overview of the Report

This report is divided into two major sections: Chapters 1 through 7, which concentrate on an analysis of findings across the fifteen family resource programs studied; and the Program Profiles section, which contains summary descriptions of the family resource programs selected for study.

More specifically, Chapter 1 provides information about how the research came about, the research questions, the methodology that was used to select the case study sites, the data gathering process, the research team, some general characteristics of the programs studied, and a discussion of the limitations of the study. Prior to reporting on the findings of the study in detail, Chapters 2 and 3 (following good ecological practice) set the study context by providing an overview of some of the theoretical bases for family support. They review the guiding principles of family resource programs and consider the historical and current social context of Canadian programs. Chapter 4 proposes a working definition of family resource programs, examines the range of program categories and components offered by family resource programs in the case studies sample, and considers some of the conceptual issues related to defining and describing this work. Chapter 5 provides information about the role of child care in family resource programs. Chapter 6 explores the connections between family support and the employment support, community economic development, housing and food program components offered by family resource programs in the study sample. Chapter 7 concludes the report with a discussion of a number of key themes and issues identified by program representatives. It ends with a summary of the major lessons learned by program representatives in doing family support work.

## II. Methodology

In order to better understand and describe the potential scope and characteristics of family resource programs in Canada, a qualitative methodological approach was chosen based on detailed case studies. Information was collected about the origins, evolution and present operation of the selected programs. Common themes and issues were identified based on discussions with program representatives. The case studies offer a snapshot of the selected family resource programs as they operated during the time of the research visits, from October 1996 to June 1997. The study is descriptive and should not be construed as an evaluation of the participating programs.

### The Research Team

The research team was made up of four members:

*Irene J. Kyle, M.Sc.*, Principal Investigator. Irene is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Family Relations and Human Nutrition at the University of Guelph. Her research focuses on child care, family resource programs and related social policy issues. She returned to university after working for twenty years in a supervisory and administrative capacity in a wide range of child care and family support settings, and as a senior policy analyst for child care and social assistance programs with the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Irene has also been Executive Director of Canadian Mothercraft Society and of Cradleship Creche, two multi-service child care agencies in Toronto. She was a founding Board member of FRP Canada and served as a member of the Board from 1987 to 1992. Irene was originally trained as a social worker, and prior to working in child care, worked with family programs in a settlement house in downtown Toronto, as a Children's Aid worker in Calgary, and as a family counsellor in Hamilton. She is author of a number of articles on child care, family resource programs, and social policy; recent publications include: *Private and public discourses: The social context of child care*; and *Ontario home child care providers' reports of their training and educational experiences*, a background paper, commissioned by the National Family Day Care Training Project.

*Maureen Kellerman, B.A.* (Canadian Studies); Certificate in Voluntary and Non-Profit Sector Management; Associate Researcher. Maureen is the Projects Manager with the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs where she is responsible for developing proposals and supervising projects. Much of her work involves developing publications and resource materials; a recent example is *Reflecting Our Communities: A Handbook on Ethnocultural Diversity in Family Resource Programs*. Maureen has worked in the non-profit sector at the local, provincial and national levels for over fifteen years, in community development, adult education, family support and administration. Maureen has worked particularly with expectant parents, new mothers, women at home and immigrant families. She has also been active in lobbying for and helping to implement legalized midwifery in Ontario.

*Geneviève Cloutier, M.S.W.*, Assistant Researcher, helped the team to select family resource programs for study in Quebec and to prepare their program profiles. Geneviève is a co-author of *Ici, c'est chez nous/This is Our Place*, a directory of alternative resources for low-income families in Canada. She is presently coordinator of the family resource centre *La Maisonnette des Parents*, which offers drop-in and information services to low-income families in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Montreal. Previously she worked at the grassroots level in a shelter

for homeless people. She continues to work as a volunteer with an organization in the field of mental health, and her interest in problems related to immigration has led her to work with immigrant families.

*Marilyn Noble*, B.A., B.F.A., Assistant Researcher, is currently an M.Ed. (Adult Education) candidate at the University of New Brunswick. Marilyn helped the team to identify case study sites in the Atlantic region, and took part in the site visits in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Marilyn has been a museum educator, a research officer for the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission and for the past fifteen years, an adult educator and community development facilitator. Her particular areas of interest include the family resource movement, parent development, communication between parents and professionals, and women's health and well-being. She has organized many parenting programs, an annual event called "Nurturing Ourselves: Women's Health and Well-Being", and a recent national conference, "Cutting Deep: Workplace Stress and Family Violence in a Climate of Downsizing". She was a member of the editorial team for *Foundations for the Future: A Proposed Framework for Family Policy in New Brunswick*. She is also an active participant in, observer of, and media commentator on New Brunswick's new system of school parent advisory committees.

## Selection Criteria

In selecting cases to be included in the study, the researchers made considerable efforts to identify as broad and diverse a cross-section of family resource programs as possible. Because of the interest in understanding more about the child care and employment support aspects of family resource programs, programs with initiatives in these areas were particularly sought out. Child care support programs could include: information and referral services; licensed group and family day care services; support and training for independent home child care providers; head start child development programs; flexible child care (including parent relief and emergency care); rural and seasonal child care; and consultation and support to child care and other professionals. Job readiness and employment support programs could include: literacy and ESL/FLS training; life skills programs; employment counselling and referral; community economic development initiatives, and co-op and other employment opportunities.

Additional selection criteria were adopted in an effort to find a distribution among:

- programs serving urban areas (metropolitan and smaller cities), small towns, rural and more isolated communities
- programs serving a range of income groups
- programs serving a range of age groups (i.e., programs considering family needs across the life span)
- programs serving diverse cultural groups (i.e., ensuring the inclusion of programs serving Aboriginal, Black and immigrant families)
- programs operating from a single site or out of several locations in one or more communities
- different program auspices or sponsoring groups
- programs of varying size and complexity
- programs at different stages of organizational development
- programs involved in various kinds of collaborative and partnership arrangements.

The original research plan proposed to carry out case studies of ten family resource programs (or two programs from each of FRP Canada's five regional divisions). Information about the study was sent out to all of the listings on the Association's national data base asking program representatives to nominate themselves, or to suggest other organizations that might be interested in participating in the research. Several programs identified themselves as a result of their attending "work in progress" conference presentations by the researchers in Vancouver, Toronto and Ottawa. In Quebec, staff of *la Fédération des unions de familles* consulted with the researchers about possible program candidates, and assisted in making contacts and arranging exploratory visits.

The experience of identifying and selecting study sites proved more complex and took longer than originally anticipated. It was necessary to do considerably more outreach than planned (particularly in areas of the country where family resource programs are more isolated and less well known) in order to identify potential participants. As part of this process, the researchers made preliminary visits to a number of interested programs to learn more about the services they offered, to explain the purpose of the research and the research process, and to establish an organization's serious interest in participating in the study.

As a consequence of these outreach efforts an even broader range of potential case study sites was identified than originally anticipated—some in parts of the country where the Association had little prior knowledge of or contact with programs. This experience was in some respects not surprising, for it reflects the overall problem the research initially sought to address: the isolation of many family resource programs and the lack of information about their operation beyond the local and regional levels. As a result, funding was requested (and subsequently received) enabling the addition of four sites to the study. A fifteenth, and final site was added at an even later date, to allow the inclusion of a fuller range of programs from Quebec.

The researchers learned much by talking to representatives from a number of family resource programs during the preliminary visits. Many of these people, in turn, made additional referrals to other family resource programs. However, in parts of the country where family resource programs are somewhat better established, identifying more organizations meant choosing between several equally innovative and interesting programs that had indicated a willingness to participate. In these circumstances, the final selection was based on the research aim of wanting to encompass as geographically and programmatically diverse a range of family resource programs as possible. The decision not to include a particular program, therefore, should not be taken as a reflection on the merits or work of that program, but rather, as an indication of the need to place realistic limits on the number of cases studied.

### **Selected Case Study Sites**

The following is a list of the family resource programs selected for inclusion in the study. The sample, while not representative, is very diverse and includes programs from all provinces except Prince Edward Island. No programs were selected in the Yukon and Northwest Territories; considerably more time and funds would have been required to do the outreach necessary to identify programs in the North. Program profiles containing detailed program descriptions can be found in the last part of the report.

## Case Studies Sites

<p><b>British Columbia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chilliwack Community Services</li> <li>• Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, East Vancouver</li> <li>• Penticton &amp; District Community Resources Society</li> </ul> <p><b>Alberta</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calgary Catholic Immigration Society</li> </ul> <p><b>Saskatchewan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dundurn Military Family Resource Centre (formerly Saskatoon Dundurn Community Resource Centre)</li> </ul> <p><b>Manitoba</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrews Street Family Centre, Winnipeg</li> </ul> <p><b>Ontario</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East York/East Toronto Family Resources</li> <li>• Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre</li> <li>• South East Grey Community Outreach—Kids ‘N Us, Markdale</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quebec</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Le Carrefour familial Hochelaga</i>, Montreal</li> <li>• <i>La Maisonnette des Parents</i>, Montreal</li> <li>• <i>Re-Nou-Vie</i>, Châteauguay</li> </ul> <p><b>New Brunswick</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moncton Early Family Intervention Program (formerly Moncton Headstart, Inc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>Nova Scotia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North End Parent Resource Centre, Halifax</li> </ul> <p><b>Newfoundland</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Port au Port Community Education Initiative, Stephenville and Bay St. George</li> </ul>
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## General Characteristics of the Programs Studied

The following section provides a brief overview of some of the more general characteristics of the programs studied relating to their: auspices or sponsoring group(s); geographic location; program size and complexity; length of operation; and the cultural diversity of the communities they served.

The family resource programs included in the sample varied by:

- **auspices or sponsoring/originating groups.** (Note that the programs included in the sample can fit under more than one heading, e.g., they may have been both a parent group and a community group. In the following list *only a few* of the possible examples are included.) Program auspices included, for example:
  - *parent groups*: Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre, South East Grey Community Outreach, East York/East Toronto Family Resources
  - *religious groups* (religious orders, local parishes and diocesan organizations): *La Maisonnette des Parents*, *Le Carrefour familial Hochelaga*, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
  - *child care program*: Moncton Early Family Intervention Program, South East Grey Community Outreach
  - *military family support initiative*: Dundurn Military Family Resource Centre
  - *women’s (feminist) support group*: *Re-Nou-Vie*, North End Parent Resource Centre
  - *community schools/boards of education*: Port au Port Community Education Initiative, Andrews Street Family Centre
  - *community health initiatives*: North End Parent Resource Centre
  - *neighbourhood (or settlement) house tradition*: Kiwassa Neighbourhood House

- *community planning and social services*, including CLSC's (local community service centres in Quebec): Chilliwack Community Services, Penticton & District Community Resources Society, *La Maisonnette des Parents*
- **geographic location**, for example:
  - *urban, multicultural, inner city settings*: Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Andrews Street Family Centre, East York/East Toronto Family Resources, *La Maisonnette des Parents*
  - *smaller cities*: Chilliwack Community Services, Penticton & District Community Resources Society, Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre, Moncton Early Family Intervention Program
  - *programs serving small towns, rural areas and more isolated communities*: South East Grey Community Outreach, Port au Port Community Education Initiative, Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre, Penticton & District Community Resources Society.
- **program size and complexity**, for example:
  - *smaller "stand alone" family resource programs*: North End Parent Resource Centre, *Re-Nou-Vie*, Dundurn Military Family Resource Centre
  - *family resource programs nested in larger multi-service agencies*: Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Penticton & District Community Resources Society, Chilliwack Community Services
  - *satellite programs linked with and administered by a central resource base* (i.e., a network of family support programs): Chilliwack Community Services, South East Grey Community Outreach, East York/East Toronto Family Resources, Port au Port Community Education Initiative
  - *family resource programs that have expanded and evolved into more complex organizations through amalgamation of smaller programs*: Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre, East York/East Toronto Family Resources, Andrews Street Family Centre
- **length of operation**: while several of the programs studied had been in operation for a considerable number of years—Chilliwack Community Services (69 years), Kiwassa Neighbourhood House (48 years)—family resource programs/components were not introduced until much later, most commonly in the 1980s. In general, family resource programs as we currently understand them began to appear in the mid 1970s. The Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre (begun as the Family Enrichment Association in the early 1970s), St. Paul's Parent-Child Centre (now part of East York/East Toronto Family Resources begun in 1978), and the Moncton Early Family Intervention Program (originally known as Moncton Headstart, Inc., begun in 1974) are among the earliest programs studied in this sample. Andrews St. Family Centre, and the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society's Family Place are more recent additions in the mid 1990s.
- **diverse cultural groups**: the family resource programs included in the study sample served a broad range of ethnic and multicultural groups, and, in general, reflect the culture and ethnicity of the neighbourhoods in which they are located. In many instances, program staff were also consciously hired to reflect the multicultural nature of the program and community being served. For example, a number of programs serve Aboriginal families (e.g., Andrews Street Family Centre, Chilliwack Community Services, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House). The North End Parent Resource Centre, Halifax, addresses the needs

of the local Black community. East York/East Toronto Family Resources, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, *La Maisonnette des Parents* and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society offer programs which respond to the multicultural communities they serve.

## Data Gathering Process

Information about the programs was collected in various ways, through:

- *on-site visits to each family resource program* involving interviews with program staff, and to a lesser extent, interviews and meetings with Board members, community participants and representatives from collaborating or partnering organizations. Some of these interviews were tape-recorded. These visits also included opportunities for the researchers to visit different program locations and to observe some of the programs in action.
- *collection and review of existing program documents and relevant reports* such as program brochures, annual reports, evaluation and other research reports, planning documents, newsletters and other written information.
- *focus groups* with staff, board, and community participants and partnering agencies. Program staff were asked to invite representatives from various aspects of their program to take part in the focus groups that lasted, on average, approximately three hours. Focus group participants were asked to discuss two basic questions: 1. What were the most important things they had learned from their experience of developing programs and from their day-to-day work in a family resource program? 2. What were the barriers they encountered in doing their work? While these questions may appear simplistic, the answering of them is not. Many of the people who participated in these discussions commented afterwards that they had found the discussions valuable because they do not often have a chance to step back and reflect on their work. The focus group sessions were tape-recorded and flip chart notes were made, copies of which were later shared with the program staff.

The research stance adopted here is ethnographic, viewing the participants as “expert practitioners” (DeVault, 1991, Prus, 1994) who, because they live and work in a particular setting, are the ones who understand its organization: “their vocabulary, the taken-for-granted concepts that organize their talk, the structure of their accounts, all serve as features of the talk that express the social organization of the work” (DeVault, 1991, p. 29).

As part of the preliminary discussions with program representatives an interview guide was sent to each program to prepare them for the researchers’ visits and questions. The program staff were not asked to fill out this fairly extensive guide themselves, in recognition of their already heavy workloads. Rather, they were encouraged to use the guide to help them think about the information they would be asked to share with the researchers. In preparing for the site visits, the researchers developed an initial draft of the program profile (or program description) based on the information received, using it as a framework for discussions with program representatives and as a means of identifying what additional information was needed. During the site visits, as the intent of the research became clearer to the participants, program staff often provided additional information, which taken together with the researchers’ notes and focus group responses, make up the data on which the case studies and analysis are based. These program profiles went through a number of revisions, and

various drafts were reviewed by program representatives until they were satisfied that the profiles offered an accurate summary of their program during the research period.

### Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of a case study approach arises from the lack of a statistically representative sample to allow the study results and observations to be generalized to all family resource programs. However, given the absence of a current list of all Canadian family resource programs, and lack of general agreement about what constitutes a family resource program, determining a base population from which to obtain a representative sample presents a methodological challenge that goes well beyond the resources and scope of the present study. The strength of the case study approach lies in the fact that it allows for a more complex and detailed examination of various aspects of the selected programs than would be possible in the more usual survey approach. The open-ended nature of the qualitative discovery process is critically important at this stage in our efforts to better understand family resource programs. Rather than taking a more structured approach that attaches *a priori* meaning to the data, but may fail to recognize information and observations that fall outside the research framework, a qualitative approach, instead, allows the data to define and shape the analytic process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

While the researchers made considerable efforts to select a broad range of family resource programs, there is no way to be certain of the extent to which the programs studied necessarily represent all family resource programs. The sample may be somewhat biased towards established programs because of the interest in understanding the nature and evolution of family resource programs. Although programs that have evolved over a number of years and learned how to survive in the context of changing community and funding circumstances provide a rich source for information about the current operation and potential scope of family resource programs, they are not necessarily typical.

The present study then, should be understood as being descriptive, not prescriptive; *its purpose is not to suggest that a family resource program should follow a particular model, or pattern of development, or include a certain number or kinds of program components.* Rather, the study aims to provide information about the kind of family support work that is currently taking place in a number of Canadian communities, in order to create a stronger, more informed base on which to consider fundamental questions about the nature and operation of family resource programs.

It is important to understand that the family resource programs selected for study also continue to change, so that the profiles which make up the latter part of this report must be understood as snapshots of those programs during the research period from October 1996 to June 1997. Because of the widespread reorganization of social services in many parts of the country and because of cuts to funding, some aspects of the programs described may no longer exist. In some cases, funding to develop new initiatives has been secured, and in other instances new alliances and partnerships have been created. A few programs have even changed their names.

Because of the lack of consensus in the field about what constitutes a family resource program, some may question the inclusion of certain kinds of programs in the study sample. They may be right; this is part of the future discussion we all need to have with one another. What is interesting, however, is that none of the

programs included in the study (obviously) felt uncomfortable being characterized as family resource programs—or having parts of their organizations labelled as such. In organizations, where the Family Place is nested in a larger multi-service agency (such as Penticton & District Community Resources Society, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society), staff from all parts of these organizations were quite clear that the “family resource” aspects of their work extended beyond the boundaries of the Family Place per se, and involved linkages across a number of other family and children’s program areas. There are undoubtedly other family resource and support programs (unknown to the researchers, but not to our readers) that could have been included in the study. The inclusion of fifteen programs rather than the ten originally planned, speaks in some small way to this problem.

Because of the limited generalizability of the sample, the researchers have consciously chosen not to carry out a quantitative analysis that translates the findings into numbers, because of the potential for misuse and misunderstanding of this information. For example, to say that 65%, or 25% of the programs studied offered certain program components could quickly lead to assumptions about what components should or should not be offered by family resource programs in general. While the present study has provided information about the potential scope of Canadian family resource programs, it *does not* provide information about the frequency or incidence of the program components they offer—except in the most general sense.

The researchers also discovered enormous variability in terms of the kinds of program information and service statistics that were kept. There are no commonly agreed upon definitions of units of service, and the programs studied vary greatly in their capacity to collect and organize that information. To have included service information in its raw form, however, would invite comparisons that could be highly problematic. Considerably more work needs to be done to think through what kinds of statistical and program information should be kept by family resource programs, and to define how it is collected. What is valuable about this study is that it lays the groundwork for a more quantitative survey in the future and begins to suggest the scope and kind of framework that would be required.

Adopting an ecological approach poses another problem. The study involves not only a multi-level analysis of the work of selected family resource programs, but also an explication of the social and community contexts in which they operate. Because of their complex multi-service and multi-disciplinary nature, understanding family resource programs also necessitates becoming familiar with information and ideas from many academic disciplines and service areas. For any given researcher or practitioner, it is difficult to have expertise in so many different areas (e.g., child development, family counselling, adult education, health promotion, nutrition, community and economic development). It is also extremely difficult to portray the complexity of systemic, dynamic programs in linear, one-dimensional written accounts. Most of the existing frameworks for organizing information about programs are categorically-based using criteria such as age (e.g., children’s, youth, adults, seniors programs), program content or need (e.g., parent education, nutrition, life skills training). Programs which are multi-functional, multi-dimensional and serve a mix of age groups are extremely difficult to capture in written form, especially when dealing with elements of both formal and informal content and process.

While the researchers have made considerable efforts to consult with program representatives at a number of points in the development of the program profiles and have sought their approval of the published version, any

errors or omissions which may have inadvertently occurred are the sole responsibility of the researchers. The researchers' analysis and interpretation of broader issues is solidly grounded in the information collected from the programs studied. However, because of the diversity of program approaches and community contexts, representatives of the selected programs may or may not agree with particular aspects of the analysis or interpretations which have been made as part of the research findings. Some of these differences and the discussions they will inevitably provoke need not be seen as problematic, but rather, as a necessary step towards developing a greater understanding and consensus about the nature of the important work of supporting families and children and building healthy communities.

# CHAPTER 2

## Background: Setting the Context

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### I. A Brief Overview of Theoretical Ideas Underlying Family Support

According to Weiss (1986) and Halpern (1991), family resource programs exemplify a new paradigm for the provision of human services: one that focuses on primary prevention and the promotion of health and well-being, particularly for young families. The new paradigm is based on:

*... a consensus that services have to grow out of the character and life of the community in which they are embedded, and that families' support needs rarely fit the arbitrary boundaries of categorical programs, and that the heart of services is in caring relationships, not rules and procedures (Halpern, 1991, p. 361).*

While family resource programs vary in their origins and in the program components they offer, many hold a number of theoretical and conceptual ideas in common. These ideas not only shape the way family and community needs are understood, they have also served as a basis for rethinking how services should be delivered and have fostered the following theoretical ideas and approaches:

- adopting an ecological approach that leads to understanding children and families in the context of their community
- moving from a categorical, problem-oriented approach to service delivery towards a more holistic, preventive orientation
- recognizing the value of facilitating various kinds of social support as a primary preventive strategy
- shifting the professional role from expert to facilitator, and in the process, empowering people to take more control over their own lives.

Each of these ideas will be discussed briefly in the section that follows. A more detailed discussion of these ideas can be found in the research literature (e.g., Cochran, 1995; Dunst, 1995; Dallaire, Chamberland, Cameron and Hébert, 1995; Family Resource Coalition, 1996; Garbarino, 1990; Garbarino and Kostelny, 1993; Weissbourd, 1987).

## An Ecological Approach: Human Development in Context

Over the past few decades, a critical rethinking has occurred in the way developmental psychologists conceptualize human development. Bronfenbrenner's work (1974) on the evaluation of early intervention programs led to a critique of the uni- or bi-directional causal models of child development (focusing on a few selected variables) that were current at the time. The resulting ecological perspective recognized how multiple factors contribute to children's development. Put simply, an ecological approach stresses the importance of understanding human development in context (Garbarino, 1990). This alternative perspective, as articulated by Bronfenbrenner (1979), involved:

*... the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing **person** lives, as this **process** is affected by the larger **contexts** in which the settings are embedded (p. 22, emphasis added).*

Bronfenbrenner organized these contexts into four levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. The microsystem refers to the setting in which the child directly participates, e.g., the family, the child care or school setting. The exosystem refers to the broader environment in which the microsystems are embedded and which affect children's development somewhat more indirectly, e.g., their neighbourhood, their parents' workplace, the health and social welfare delivery systems available in their community. The macrosystem refers to the overarching cultural traditions, political ideologies and social values which characterize a particular culture and are often articulated through social policy. The mesosystem does not seem to represent a systems level in quite the same sense, but rather captures the idea that there is continual interaction between and across the various systems levels. These four contexts are in constant interaction with each other and directly and indirectly influence not only children's development, but also family and neighbourhood circumstances.

Bronfenbrenner (1988) further suggested that an ecological approach might be operationalized using a dynamic "process-person-context model" which necessitates taking into account:

*1. the **context** in which development is taking place; 2. the **personal characteristics** (biological and psychological) of the persons present in that context; and 3. the **process** through which their development is brought about (p. 36).*

In writing about ecological intervention as a preventive strategy, Bronfenbrenner (1974) combined ideas about the interaction between families and community. In his thinking:

*Ecological intervention ... requires a major change in the environment in which both mother and child are living. The essence of the strategy is a primary focus neither on the child, nor his parent, nor even the dyad or the family as a system. Rather, **the aim is to effect changes in the context in which the family lives**; these changes in turn enable the mother, the parents and the family as a whole to exercise the functions necessary for the child's development (p. 47, emphasis added).*

Bronfenbrenner also stressed the importance of supporting parents as a means of promoting children's development: "... an essential prerequisite for the child's development is an environment which provides substantial opportunity and support for parental activity" (1974, p. 48). Concretely, this means: "adequate health care, nutrition, housing, employment, and opportunity and status for parenthood" (p. 55).

Understanding children in context then, means a shift away from a narrow focus solely on children, on their experiences and specific attributes of their development, to a broader focus that takes into account the various ways that parents and communities also contribute to their development. This broader focus also leads to a rethinking of how services should be provided and the way in which professionals approach their work with families.

*People live in communities. But the real importance of "living in community" is that people—and groups of people—develop ways and means to care for each other, to nurture the talents and leadership that enhance the quality of community life, and to tackle the problems that threaten the community and the opportunities which can help it. (Aspen Institute, 1996, p. 1)*

Another aspect of an ecological perspective is the related understanding that some of the problems families face are of a more systemic nature requiring intervention at a community and societal level (Garbarino, 1990). In this respect, Goffin (1983) has pointed out that:

*... many of the most critical problems that face families and their children are beyond individual control and reflect the external conditions under which families live. This perspective emphasizes the futility of focussing on an individual child without simultaneously recognizing the social and economic context in which the family lives (p. 284).*

Understanding that the problems families face are not always the result of personal problems or inadequacies translates at a program level to a focus on mobilizing group and community resources, and on advocating for a variety of measures and services that contribute to the development of a safe and sustainable community (see also Dallaire, Chamberland, Cameron and Hébert, 1995). Zigler and Freedman (1987) note that an ecological approach changes the focus of "... programs from a single individual toward the relations among family members and between the family as a whole and the community at large" (p. 57). It is important to understand that "community" in this sense is more than the social context in which families and children live; it is the setting itself that becomes the focus for collective analysis and action. The program profiles contain a number of examples of how Canadian family resource programs have worked together with program participants to advocate on behalf of their families and neighbourhoods.

## **Moving From a Categorical Approach to a More Holistic Orientation**

Historically, many children's services were developed in response to specific problems or to deal with crisis situations when family members were no longer able to manage on their own, or with help from their families (Goffin, 1983). Health, child welfare, child care and education services, for example, have generally operated as separate services by differently trained service providers who deal with different aspects of children's lives quite

separately. These workers may or may not involve parents or consult with other service providers. This categorical or single strategy approach has often led to a fragmentation of services that families with multiple needs, in particular, experience as dysfunctional as they struggle to cope with many conflicting expectations and demands. For example, representatives from the South East Grey Community Outreach program discussed this issue when describing the reasons for their move to a more integrated and multi-faceted model of rural child care services:

*Community participants were clear that although they greatly appreciated the many [service] choices available to them, the organization was literally “driving them crazy” with different program names, different criteria, different legislation issues, different funding issues, access issues ... Community parents didn’t care whether they were a “Jobs Ontario” parent, an “upgrading” parent, a “stay-at-home” parent, a working parent; they just wanted to be a PARENT. Likewise, they did not want to worry about whether programs were resource centre programs, provincial pilot programs, licensed child care programs—they just wanted access to flexible program options in their local community (SEGCO, 1996, p. 6)*

An ecological approach leads not only to a more firmly grounded view of children and families, it also often leads to the reorganizing and linking of separate family support services so that they are more accessible, flexible, and thereby better able to respond on short notice to multiple needs. Weiss (1986) has drawn attention to the important linking function family resource program staff often perform by acting as intermediaries and occasionally, advocates for families needing assistance regarding how and where to connect with more formal agencies and government services.

Family support programs also provide other kinds of support that are often unavailable from other agencies and service professionals whose work time is structured much more strictly. Weiss uses the example of busy physicians in a neonatal intensive care unit who don’t have the time (and sometimes, the inclination) to allay a parent’s anxieties. Kérisit and St-Amand (1997) comment on how “alternative” family support programs “find ways to pattern time which resist the fragmented, measured time structurally imposed by the dominant capitalist culture...”, and note that successful programs are not exclusively “program-driven”; rather, time is taken for “living together”, to build trust and allow for natural connections to occur (p. 149). By adopting an holistic approach, family support programs also promote a sense of “community”, of collective responsibility and solidarity, by taking into account:

*... the whole person, with all her physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual needs within the context of her family and her society. Nobody is reduced to being only her “problem” or need. When needs are met, families tend to remain actively involved in the organization; such an approach creates a solidarity based on people rather than on specific problems. As a result, the common bonds tend to last longer and be more stable than those based on the mere resolution of problems (St-Amand, Kérisit, Martineau, Cloutier, and Malenfant, 1996, p. 49).*

## The Value of Social Support

Practice in family resource programs is firmly based on an understanding of the important role various kinds of social support can play in the promotion of health and well-being, in fostering personal competency and a sense of civic responsibility, and in facilitating group or collective efforts (Dunst and Trivette, 1993). Social support involves both informal and formal sources. Informal sources of support include family members, neighbours, friends and others, as well as social groups (churches, clubs and neighbourhood organizations) that people turn to for information and help with daily living (Gottlieb, 1981; Unger and Powell, 1980). Formal sources of support include various professionals (a family doctor, school social worker) and agencies (public health departments, welfare offices and children's aid societies) that are organized to provide material aid and other assistance to families, especially when their informal sources of support are unable to manage any longer (Dunst, Trivette, Deal, 1988; Unger and Powell, 1980).

The combining of informal social support with formal support from a variety of community services, provides families with the knowledge and skills to carry out their parenting responsibilities, and can increase their ability to cope by fostering independence and mutuality. Family resource programs build on the health-promoting and competency-enhancing aspects of social support and avoid focusing on individual problems and deficits. Moreover, they recognize that *all* families have needs at one time or another for support, not just those who may be deemed as "high risk" in order to become eligible for programs.

At a community level, fostering social support can help to combat the isolation and alienation that can breed the kinds of destructive and violent activities that make for unsafe and high-risk neighbourhoods (Garbarino, 1990; Garbarino and Kostelny, 1993). By getting together to plan and work on community issues, people can come to know and trust their neighbours, a prerequisite for building informal support networks. In their study of community influences on infant mortality, for example, Garbarino and Kostelny noted that the high-risk neighbourhood they studied had a "socially impoverished human ecology" characterized by "less positive neighbouring and more stressful day-to-day interactions among families" (p. 210). They also found that

### Why support families?

Healthy families and communities are the basis of a productive society. Well-functioning families are better positioned not only to rear competent children, but also to contribute to the work force, the economy and to the creation of strong and vibrant communities:

*The United Nations (1991) has referred to the family "as the basic unit of society." The family is "appreciated for the important socio-economic functions that it performs. In spite of the many changes in society that have altered its role and functions it continues to provide the natural framework for the emotional, financial and material support essential to the growth and development of its members, particularly infants and children, and for the care of other dependents, including the elderly, disabled and infirm. The family remains a vital means of preserving and transmitting cultural values. In the broader sense, it can, and often does educate, train, motivate and support its individual members, thereby investing in their future growth and acting as a vital resource for development" (Vanier Institute, 1994, p. 10).*

specific community conditions such as the presence of a strong informal support network among social service agencies, the availability of prenatal care, parent education and other support programs were related to lower infant mortality rates. In communities with few supports (e.g., where there were hospital closings and an absence of parenting and other support programs) infant mortality rates were higher (Garbarino and Kostelny, 1993, p. 208).

Dunst (1995) suggests that family support programs promote social support in four ways, through:

1. building supportive *interdependencies* among community members in ways that promote the flow of resources and opportunities to and from families
2. assisting families to become linked with other resources and sources of support in their communities
3. working with more traditional human service providers to help them reorient their policies and practices so they are more consistent with family support principles
4. working in ways which promote family competence and enable people to become less dependent upon formal services to meet their needs (based on p. 10).

### Changing the Professional Role from Expert to Facilitator

Throughout the family support literature there is frequent reference to the fundamental shift in professional roles and service delivery approaches from the “paternalistic or expertise-based human services practices” to empowerment models that challenge “entrenched thinking about the capabilities of people, the role people should play as part of their involvement in helping processes, and the ways in which helpgivers and helping agencies view their roles and responsibilities in interactions with people they serve” (Dunst, 1995, p. 20-21; see also Halpern, 1991; and Rappaport, 1987). Cochran and his colleagues in the Cornell Empowerment Group (1995) have done considerable work in thinking through a process model of empowerment based on community development ideas. They have defined empowerment as being:

*... an intentional, dynamic, ongoing process centred in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (1992, p. 3).*

In their understanding, the way in which services are offered is as important as achieving program goals such as improved literacy, reduced unemployment or optimal child development. At the heart of empowerment is mutual respect and valuing of diversity in terms of race, class, gender, family composition, age and sexual preference. Closely associated is the belief “that the deficit model of family assistance, in which people must demonstrate inadequacy in order to become eligible for support is counter-productive...” (p. 5).

The empowerment process also requires that people in helping roles work to reduce the powerlessness of marginalized people and aid in the redistribution of essential resources. Dallaire, Chamberland, Cameron and Hébert (1995) note that: “unequal sharing of power constitutes a major determining factor in the deterioration of home environments and of individuals ... as it inhibits individuals from taking an active part in building the

social structures that determine their quality of life and living conditions” (p. 124). Empowerment further requires that groups take time to reflect on what they want to accomplish and where they are going, such as when a neighbourhood group meets to think about what they need to do to make their neighbourhood a safe and healthy place to raise children. Another essential part of the empowerment process is the valuing and promotion of collective responsibility, of a sense of caring for and about others, as exemplified in the popular saying: “it takes a whole village to raise a child.”

Finally, the Cornell Empowerment Group suggests that a basic premise of empowerment approaches is that:

*... people who are disadvantaged by the way society is currently structured ... must play the primary role in developing the strategies by which they gain increased control over valued resources if they are to be able to develop the self-confidence and the skills to accept responsibility for their own growth and the healthy development of their children (p. 6).*

These definitions of empowerment are all ecological, recognizing the critical interdependency and reciprocity between individuals, families, the networks and organizations they relate to and the communities they live in. They also recognize the multiple roles people play in relation to using formal services. While people may need and receive help, their rights and obligations as consumers (in terms of influencing the policies and programs provided), and as citizens (in terms of the leadership and volunteer contributions they make to improving life in their communities) are also taken into account. Building self-esteem comes not only from successfully overcoming personal or family problems, but from being needed, and from people feeling they have something to contribute to others. Dallaire, Chamberland, Cameron and Hébert (1995) point out in this respect, that:

*Clients should be co-producers of services, active citizens who feel responsible for themselves and for the quality of their environment. Intervention should also foster social change, build on the strengths of individuals and communities, produce political and economic changes, and therefore, challenge the status quo (p. 125, citations omitted).*

Moving to an empowerment approach involves a shift in political values concerning the nature of citizenship and a change in the nature of the social contract that exists between governments (as funders and policy setters), community institutions (as service providers), and individual citizens. Many of the values associated with empowerment, such as building on the strengths of people and communities, directly contradict and challenge values associated with the dominant neo-conservative ideology that places blame on individuals, punishing and marginalizing them for not being able to overcome systemic problems such as poverty and unemployment (Cohen, 1997; Kérisit and St-Amand, 1997; Novick, 1997; Shragge, 1997).

Dunst and Trivette (1996) have also written about empowerment, and suggest that in practice empowerment requires three inter-related elements:

1. an *empowerment ideology* or belief that all people have existing strengths and capabilities, as well as the capacity to become more competent.

2. *participatory experiences* that strengthen people's existing capabilities and promote the acquisition of new competencies. Participatory experiences also bring people together in ways that foster collective action and solutions to problems thereby breaking down their isolation.
3. *empowerment outcomes* that include strengthened or learned behaviours as well as the sense of self-esteem and coping ability that allows people to take control over important life events and situations (based on p. 334).

## II. Guiding Principles of Family Resource Programs

Many family resource programs share common assumptions and principles that guide the way services are developed and delivered. In 1994, representatives from family resource programs across Canada who came together to formulate a response to the Axworthy Social Security Review identified a number of principles and assumptions to guide the development and operation of programs (Kyle, 1994). These principles are based on extensive practical experience and derived from prior research and theoretical concepts such as an ecological approach to service delivery, an understanding of the importance of social support and the adoption of empowering practices as discussed earlier.

Key principles of family resource programs are:

- Family resource programs focus on prevention and the promotion of wellness and optimal development, especially during children's earliest years. They seek to build on family strengths rather than on deficits or problems and work to increase opportunities for growth and change.
- Parenting is viewed as a developmental and growth experience. Knowledge about child development is an essential factor in helping parents to become more effective. Parents are also multi-dimensional beings; they have other roles and responsibilities beyond that of parenting.
- Family resource programs emphasize interdependence and mutuality and recognize that at various times in their lives all families may need help. At the same time as they are receiving help, family members may also be able to contribute support to others in their own family and in their community.
- Family resource programs are consumer-directed, designed with parents and community members to meet their expressed needs and to enhance individual and family strengths.
- Services are holistic and not narrowly targeted and thus do not stigmatize or alienate individuals or groups with special needs.
- Services are collaborative; they seek to complement existing community organizations and institutions and to establish cooperative linkages with them.
- Services are responsive to cultural, individual and community traditions and values, especially concerning child-rearing.
- Participation is voluntary. Family members who choose to take part in programs are more likely to experience control over their lives and to be more open to change. In the long run, coercion only perpetuates dependency (based on Family Resource Coalition, 1995; see also Weissbourd, 1991).

The U.S. research literature on family resource programs also contains various accounts of the philosophy and principles that guide family resource programs. Dunst (1995) notes that more than 24 different versions have been developed; despite this variation there is also considerable agreement about fundamental ideas and concepts. Dunst has suggested that family support principles can be grouped into the following six categories stressing the importance of:

- enhancing a sense of community by promoting the coming together of people around shared values and common needs in ways that create mutually beneficial interdependencies
- mobilizing resources and support systems to enhance the flow of resources in ways that assist families with their parenting responsibilities
- shared responsibility and collaboration between professionals and parents
- protecting family integrity
- strengthening family functioning
- adopting consumer-driven service delivery models and practices that support and strengthen family functioning (p. 13-15).

In 1996, following an extensive period of consultation with its members about good practice in family support programs, the U.S. Family Resource Coalition updated their statement of premises and principles of family support practice. The nine principles and the values they articulate consolidate earlier statements:

1. *Staff and families work together in relationships based on equality and respect.*
2. *Staff enhance families' capacity to support the growth and development of all family members—adults, youth and children.*
3. *Families are resources to their own members, to other families, to programs and to communities.*
4. *Programs affirm and strengthen families' cultural, racial, and linguistic identities and enhance their ability to function in a multi-cultural society.*
5. *Programs are embedded in their communities and contribute to the community-building process.*
6. *Programs advocate with families for services and systems that are fair, responsive, and accountable to the families served.*
7. *Practitioners work with families to mobilize formal and informal resources to support family development.*
8. *Programs are flexible and continually responsive to emerging family and community issues.*
9. *Principles of family support are modelled in all program activities, including planning, governance and administration (p. 6).*

Variations of these principles often appear as part of the mission statements of Canadian family resource programs, and aspects of them may be translated into more specific organizational objectives. The challenge is to translate these principles into everyday policies and practices, and to maintain program integrity when faced with funding criteria and government initiatives that are categorical and/or deficit-oriented. A number of the remaining sections of this report will explore how the family resource programs in this study have attempted to put these ideas into practice. More detailed statements of each family resource program's mission and value statements can be found under the Program Profiles section of the report.

# CHAPTER 3

## The Historical and Current Social Context of Canadian Family Resource Programs

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### I. An Historical Overview of Canadian Programs

In writing about the origins and evolution of family resource programs in the United States, Weissbourd (1994, 1991, 1987) has suggested that current practices and principles are derived from earlier approaches:

- promoting parent education as a way that parents could obtain support for childrearing
- a community-based focus on empowering families, originally associated with settlement houses
- peer support and mutual aid ideas, associated with self-help groups
- programs that view the family as the major influence on a child's development, such as Head Start
- an emphasis, derived from social work practices, on the importance of developing programs to respond to individual needs while continuing to recognize the important connection between individual well-being and the general welfare of society.

In Canada, family resource programs share many of the same roots as their U.S. counterparts. In addition to the contributions associated with parent education, settlement houses and self-help programs, Canadian programs draw on a long tradition of public health efforts to promote maternal and child health; on community development approaches; on the efforts of rural extension, community education and co-operative programs to foster economically viable communities; and on women's collective efforts to address families' needs.

This chapter explores the historical roots of Canadian efforts to develop various human services in order to illustrate the extent to which many of the ideas currently associated with family resource programs are a very real part of our philosophical heritage with roots in historical practice. In some instances, the discussion will be based on information provided by family resource programs in the study sample. Recalling our history helps us to understand the ecological context of present day programs. Moreover it begins to suggest the rich inter-disciplinary nature of that historical experience, and points to a number of potential allies and future collaborators for those working in family support programs.

#### The Settlement (or Neighbourhood) House Movement

Toynbee Hall, the first settlement house, was founded in 1884 in London's East End, by the Rev. Samuel Barnett, as a way of reforming the living conditions in an urban slum. The settlement house brought recent university

graduates from Oxford and Cambridge together “into community” with working-class Londoners for a variety of educational and cultural programs and encouraged them to form a common purpose together. Toynbee Hall also served as a base for early trade union organizing, advocacy and the promotion of social reform. Central to the group’s ideas was the importance of “community” and the notion that the settlement house would “bridge the gulf separating class from class and allow men and women to connect one by one with each other as human beings” (Meacham, 1987, p. x). Education would help people to “realize their best selves”, open them to greater opportunities, and encourage more responsible citizens who would in turn, contribute to the betterment of society.

From Britain, the settlement house idea spread to the U.S. and to Canada. The first settlement house in Toronto—Evangelia—was established in 1902 by Sara Libby Carson and Mary Bell, who worked with the YWCA to establish the program on Queen Street East in what was then a poor Anglo-Saxon working district. After a visit to Hull House in Chicago, J.J. Kelso, one of the pioneers of child welfare in Ontario, also became convinced of the merits of the settlement movement. Kelso was instrumental in organizing the first university-based settlement house in downtown Toronto to serve immigrant families. The University Settlement House continues to operate to the present day.

In 1909, Kelso spoke to students of Victoria College about his understanding of the role of university settlements. His references to “neighbourly” support rather than “charity” as a means of addressing social concerns convey an early sense of the importance of empowering families and communities:

*... the social settlement becomes the centre of attraction for young and old, because the varying needs of all are catered to in a spirit of comradeship and goodwill, and with an entire absence of the charity or patronizing spirit ... for no other agency is so well calculated to touch fundamentally and yet acceptably the problem of congestion, poverty and social distress ... It is well to bear in mind also that the social settlement is not a dispenser of charity. Worthy cases may be referred to the proper authority, but emphasis must always be laid on the neighbourly spirit (Jones and Rutman, 1981, p. 128).*

## Promotion of Maternal and Child Health

Parent education, outreach and other health promotion strategies were an integral part of early Canadian efforts to address high rates of infant mortality at the turn of the century. There was, even then, recognition of the importance of early intervention. Sutherland (1976) describes, for example, how depots were set up in Hamilton, Ontario beginning in 1909, to provide “pure” milk for bottle-fed infants. In addition, the depots expanded their work to operating well-baby clinics located in a hospital and a number of school basements. Public health nurses from these clinics made home visits to monitor children’s health and to educate mothers about proper hygiene and sanitary practices. Similar programs were also offered in Toronto and Montreal. Sutherland notes that: “Successful baby welfare clinics, however, relied extensively on volunteers to help in their operation, to persuade mothers to use them, and to maintain a climate of public opinion that valued and supported ‘better babies’ work in the community” (p. 67).

In 1915, prenatal care was also introduced through baby clinics in Regina, Saskatchewan. According to Sutherland, this was because early studies “underlined again and again the need to concentrate on the child’s early hours and days when its hold on life was most precarious” (p. 64). Prenatal care not only served to reduce

the number of infant deaths, but was also an important factor in improving maternal health. By the 1920s, most larger Canadian cities and towns had developed similar services and the previously high rates of infant mortality declined significantly. In the emerging public health system, nurses:

*... organized and conducted well-baby clinics, weighing stations ... visited the home ... made the preliminary and sometimes only inspection of school children, reported defects to parents and urged that their children be treated, taught health and hygiene to women's organizations and school children, and often sponsored Little Mothers Leagues and Junior Red Cross branches. By the end of the 1920s, over 1500 registered public health nurses were at work in Canada (p. 87).*

While the education efforts of the time may have been didactic and somewhat patronizing, these early programs recognized the importance of outreach and home visiting, and relied heavily on voluntary helpers and local community support for their operation. Through well-baby clinics and regular monitoring of child health in public schools, the clinics were well situated to carry out what we now think of as health promotion and prevention.

Some pioneers also recognized the importance of responsive, individualized programming. Morrison (1976) describes the founding of the Victorian Order of Home Helpers (later to become the Victorian Order of Nurses) in 1896 by the National Council of Women of Canada to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In announcing the establishment of the new nursing order, Lady Aberdeen outlined three broad objectives for the service:

*... nursing the sick, care of mothers and children, education of the public in domestic science and home sanitation. "The need today," declared Lady Aberdeen, "is for a practical woman who has some training and will go from house to house doing all sorts of mercy and kindness rather than the nurse just selected to go to a certain place to attend a certain case" (p. 69).*

Although the home-visiting functions of public health nurses have declined considerably in many parts of Canada in recent years—primarily due to funding constraints—many public health departments have retained their focus on health promotion and parent education. For example, the Nobody's Perfect program, developed in conjunction with public health groups in Atlantic Canada in the 1980s, has been widely adopted across the country (Vanderplaat, M., 1988). In many communities, family resource programs sponsor Nobody's Perfect groups, and many parents who take part continue their involvement after completing the course.

## Self-Help and Mutual Aid Groups

In self-help and mutual aid groups people come together on the basis of a common experience or concern to share information and to help each other to cope with problems or issues. Group members take an active role in addressing their own problems and look to each other for support and understanding. They often use their group as a base from which to advocate for social change. One of the earliest and best known self-help groups is Alcoholics Anonymous, which was formed in 1935. Pape (n.d.) notes that in Canada, numerous groups now exist to address problems such as life transitions, physical disabilities and illnesses, emotional problems, eating disorders, bereavement, habits or addictions, or living with someone who has such problems. These groups are run by their members on a reciprocal and egalitarian basis: "the seeker of help is an active participant as well as a

helper in the helping process” (p. 2). Experiential knowledge is highly valued—the knowledge that comes from having personally experienced a problem and having found a way to manage it.

Self-help groups succeed by providing many kinds of social support, including information-sharing and advice, and often specific help through “group caring and support consisting of feelings of friendship, hope, and being understood” (Pape, p. 3). Members do not feel stigmatized or judged. They often experience a growing sense of competency and self-esteem built on overcoming their own problems and a greater sense of self-worth from being able to offer help to others. Family resource programs incorporate similar ideas about social support and mutual aid into their basic principles and practices. In many cases family resource programs facilitate the development of mutual support groups as part of their program components or provide meeting space and other resources.

### Toy Libraries, Drop-Ins, and Parent-Child Centres

Toy libraries or *joujouthèques* were introduced in Canada through community programs such as public libraries and community centres and have been operating from about 1970. Unlike their European counterparts in Sweden and Denmark, which were set up in the early 1960s to serve children with special needs, Canadian toy libraries have generally been open to all families and children.

Mayfield (1988) describes toy libraries as “resource centres for parents and young children which provide developmentally appropriate materials, ... support, counselling, instructional activities and information related to play, learning and child development” (p. 1). She reports that U.S. evaluations of these programs generally indicate a number of positive effects for parents and children which go well beyond the simple loan of toys and equipment. Benefits can include:

*... increased parent-child interaction and children’s retention of skills; increased number of toys and games in the home and increased parental awareness of the development of children’s play; increased parental feelings of competence in helping their children and feeling that their children were capable of learning; increased support for mothers and reduced family isolation; better speech, greater curiosity and more interest in reading; and increased parental knowledge about play and child development (p. 2).*

A survey of community-based toy libraries in Britain arrived at similar conclusions:

*[Toy libraries] meet the needs of families in a low-key way that is acceptable to parents regardless of their social and economic circumstances, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They can provide an informal meeting place where parents can make friends and find support ... Perhaps most importantly they can encourage parents to take a knowledgeable interest in their child’s development through access to ideas for play activities and to the toys that foster the play (Head and Barton, 1987, cited in Mayfield, 1988, p. 2).*

Parent-child resource centres were developed in the early 1970s in Canada as preventive community programs, offering a range of services to families with young children. Early examples of these programs include West

Side Family Place, established in Vancouver, B.C. in 1973; the Parent Preschool Resource Centre, established in Ottawa in 1975; and the Children's Storefront, established in Toronto in 1975.

## Community Development Approaches

Some family resource programs have become interested in community development and involved in co-operative ventures, community education, and community economic development initiatives as part of their efforts to respond holistically to the needs of families. There is an increasing recognition that some problems families face, such as unemployment, the lack of affordable housing or food insecurity stem from economic and social circumstances rather than from personal inadequacies. Collective education and social action are necessary if these sorts of problems are to be overcome (Cohen, 1997; Kérisit and St-Amand, 1997; Novick, 1997; Shragge, 1997). If children are hungry, if housing and jobs are unavailable, fundamental barriers to family well-being and stability are created that no amount of parenting support and education can address.

Community development ideas and strategies have for some time been an integral part of the thinking and development of family resource programs in the neighbourhood house tradition, or in programs started by grassroots community groups, community schools and health centres. The following sections will give a brief overview of some Canadian experiences with various aspects of community development. Areas of commonality with family resource programs will be highlighted, as will potential areas for future linkage and collaboration. The research and theoretical literature in this area is extensive so that only a few examples will be given (see for instance, Cochran, 1992; Doucet, Laval and Favreau, 1991; Family Resource Coalition, 1997; Melnyk, 1985; Nozick, 1993; Ng, Walker and Muller, 1991; Shragge, 1993).

The term community development is used here in the most general sense to describe efforts by individual citizens and local groups and services to work together to address the needs and improve the quality of life and opportunities in their community. It is somewhat artificial to consider community economic development, co-operative approaches and community education as separate areas; in practice, they are often closely interwoven. For example, co-operative organizations are often formed to address community economic issues. Education is usually seen as one of the fundamental tools in the empowerment process, in building leadership and in promoting solidarity and collective action. Shragge (1993) explains that for community economic development (CED) to be effective two conditions must be fulfilled:

*First, the CED project needs a strong sense of itself as a political, social and economic organization with a clear vision of its goals and practice. Empowerment of people in the local community through direct participation in a social process is the second condition. An outreach and educational strategy is necessary in this process (p. 16).*

### Community economic development

This community intervention strategy seeks to develop alternative approaches to traditional economic development (Shragge, 1993). With the current high rates of unemployment, the downsizing of business and industry, and the cutbacks to education and social programs, community organizations are increasingly being challenged to seek alternative solutions to the economic and employment crises experienced by local families.

MacLeod (1984) has defined CED as: "...a co-operative attempt by local people to take control of the socio-economic destiny of the community...to respond to local needs as community members perceive them" (cited in Shragge, p. 12). Typically, community economic development initiatives promote the development of an "alternative" economy focusing on local needs and circumstances rather than on the demands of the "global" marketplace. They involve the creation of new forms of economic practice, based on self-help, and often rely on the creation of small businesses or "micro-enterprises." Wismer and Pell (1984) suggest that CED differs from private sector business in a number of ways. It is a more integrated approach to development, involving social, cultural and community goals; it is non-profit and concerned with producing socially useful products; it recognizes the capacity of people to manage their own affairs and to control the developmental process; it is concerned with creating good working conditions and with providing opportunities for worker input and decision-making (cited in Shragge, p. 12).

CED approaches (like family resource principles) recognize and build on the human skills and physical resources available in a community. Nozick (1993, pp. 21-25) has identified four basic tools that communities can use to generate local wealth:

- *Making more with less by maximizing the use of existing resources* - Family resource programs often facilitate the recycling and exchange of clothing, toys, equipment and furniture among program participants and raise money by collecting and selling such items. Many of their food programs and community kitchens depend, in part, on donations of surplus food from restaurants, supermarkets, or local farmers that would otherwise have been thrown away.
- *Making the money go round—circulating dollars within a community* - This strategy includes supporting local businesses and hiring local workers, making loans available to start small businesses, or carrying out local projects that benefit the community, such as repairing housing or community facilities. Many family resource programs make a practice of hiring at least some of their staff from among community residents and experienced program participants. Organizing credit unions and *caisses populaires* is another example of this strategy in action.
- *Making things locally, rather than importing them from outside* - Nozick uses the example of community housing projects that renovate or rebuild substandard or deteriorating housing using local workers and recycled building materials.
- *Making something new that is marketable* - This strategy depends upon peoples' inventiveness and creativity in developing marketable goods and services. Creating a viable, stable business is perhaps the most challenging aspect of community economic development.

Examples of how family resource programs have initiated community economic development approaches will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### **Co-operative approaches**

In his discussion of the historical evolution of the co-operative movement, Melnyk (1985) notes that "the term 'co-operative' was one of the many words used to describe collective self-help." He defines a co-operative as "an organization created for the practice of co-operation" where people group together to help themselves. Co-operative ideas have been used as underlying principles in developing organizations "to provide child care, to build houses, to farm land, and even to bury people" (p. 3-4). Some family resource programs have incorporated

co-operative ideas into various aspects of their programs, leading to the provision of co-operative babysitting and child care programs, food-buying programs and co-operative businesses. Family resource programs associated with feminist groups may operate their organizations as collectives.

In Canada, co-operatives developed historically on a regional basis and in ways that reflect their differing cultural and economic circumstances. In Nova Scotia, the Antigonish movement, originating as an adult education movement out of St. Francis Xavier University in the 1920s and 1930s, led to the development of a number of co-operative business enterprises and the creation of local jobs. Two priests, Fathers J. J. Tompkins and M. Coady, with the support of the University Extension Department, helped to develop a number of study clubs—small discussion groups of five to ten people who met weekly. These groups went on to initiate a number of community-based economic projects such as canneries, marketing co-ops and credit unions (Melnyk 1980, p. 20). The parallels between the philosophy of the Antigonish Movement with its focus on “human capital formation” and on the creation of an “intellectual infrastructure” and family support notions of empowerment are striking. At the heart of family support practice are the educational development process and mobilization of collective concern described by Dodara and Pluta (1995):

*The process of establishing ... collective entrepreneurship required groups to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and more importantly, for individuals in the groups to trust and respect each other ... The activities of the [Antigonish] Movement were centred on the community. The importance of this cannot be ignored since it made it into something which people could identify with, and in effect, call their own, thus fostering both pride and commitment ... Perhaps of even greater significance were the psychological, social and ultimately moral effects of the Movement. The co-operative and people-oriented nature and ideology ... called for people to be active participants in improving their lot. It promoted the idea that people had power over their economic environment and circumstances which shaped their lives and the life of their community; that they, in fact mattered and could become the “masters of their own destiny”. Thus the Movement countered the general feeling of moral hopelessness, powerlessness and even individual worthlessness, as well as the sense of community stagnation and decline ... (p. 6-9).*

In Quebec, the co-operative movement developed in the form of the *caisses populaires*, or credit unions; in Western Canada, it led to the formation of wheat pools, credit unions and other farmer-led co-operative groups. Credit unions were organized in an effort to “democratize the economic system” and overcome the sense of exploitation “by profit-motivated institutions with head offices located outside the region” (Melnyk, p. 21). By forming credit unions, members could gain more control of such things as policies concerning the granting and foreclosure of loans; support for starting new enterprises; and the creation of local investment opportunities. In addition to economic ventures, prairie co-operatives also served as a base for organizing a number of educational and social programs, which ultimately led to the formation of two new political parties, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), and the Social Credit party (Melnyk, p. 26).

### **Community education approaches**

Community education also takes on different forms in different parts of the country. It may be initiated by university or community college extension departments, by local school boards or by various kinds of community

groups and social organizations. The history of community education approaches in Canada cannot be adequately summarized in this report. Instead, examples of two different approaches will be briefly described—the school-based Community Education Strategy as adopted in southwest Newfoundland by the Port au Port Community Education Initiative, and the *éducation populaire autonome* (popular education) movement in Quebec. Both groups draw on ideas about education for social change as articulated by Paolo Freire, “based on the principle[s] that both the educator and the students are in a process of learning and teaching” and that ignorance makes it difficult for people to meaningfully participate as workers and citizens (Norton, 1993, p. 127; see also, Freire, 1973).

In 1997, a report by the Port au Port Community Education Initiative described community education as: “a process whereby learning is used for individual and community betterment. It is characterized by the involvement of people of all ages, the use of community learning, resources and research to bring about community change, and the recognition that people can learn through, with, and for each other to create a better world.”<sup>1</sup> The principles of community education include self-determination and self-help, leadership development of citizens, inclusiveness, decentralization of decision-making, institutional responsiveness, integrated delivery of services and the maximum use of community resources. They clearly echo a number of family support principles.

Community education is seen as a vehicle to connect communities, service agencies and educators; schools serve not only to educate the community, they are also centres where many community-building activities take place. The philosophy and orientation of community education extends beyond more traditional definitions of education. Early childhood development, academic schooling, skills training, work experience, literacy and life skills are envisioned as part of a continuum of learning that promotes education as a life-long learning process. Implementing a community education strategy not only provides youth with learning experiences, it also creates opportunities for them to take part in community service and other meaningful work. Finally, it helps volunteers to develop leadership skills and seeks to promote citizenship through workshops, round tables and community forums. To further support community participation and to respect local ideas and customs, the Port au Port Community Education Initiative, together with the Long Range Regional Economic Development Board has built on the “Fogo process” of participatory communication. This process has involved setting up communication networks throughout southwest Newfoundland. Local radio, television and the Internet are all used to share information and facilitate public participation in identifying and resolving community issues.

In Quebec, Selman and Dampier (1997) report the existence of over one thousand popular education groups accredited by the *Mouvement d'éducation populaire et d'action communautaire du Québec* (MÉPACQ) and associated with welfare and tenants' rights organizations, injured workers groups, women's centres and shelters, organizations of the unemployed and literacy groups. Participants in these groups tend to be from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, have limited formal education and do not participate in more formal education services. While part of the purpose of popular education is to promote individual learning and greater understanding, there is also an equally clear focus on promoting citizenship and collective action to address

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1 This discussion is based on information obtained from several unpublished reports given to the researchers by Beverley Kirby, Executive Director, Port au Port Community Education Initiative, Stephenville, Newfoundland.

social concerns. MÉPACQ has adopted the following definition of *éducation populaire autonome*, or noninstitutional education, which involves:

*... a variety of learning activities and critical reflections by which citizens collectively take action. These activities further lead citizens, individually and collectively to a “prise de conscience” [heightened understanding] of their working or living conditions, which they will use to effect short and long term social, economic, cultural and political changes in their milieu (Selman and Dampier, 1997, p. 98).*

Chené and Chervin, (1991) report that typically, small groups of volunteers and community residents would come together in a neighbourhood setting or community centre to exchange information. Little by little, they would find or develop services and resources such as community health clinics, food co-operatives, women’s centres and other groups to solve their specific problems. This approach of education through collective action is a concrete manifestation of empowerment at a community level. As Chené and Chervin explain:

*The dynamic between action and education leads to those most affected being the principal artisans of the changes brought about. Through experiencing leadership, working democratically, stretching one’s capacity to further control one’s milieu through group actions, the idea “that we can’t do anything” is eroded. Furthermore, through confronting obstacles, sometimes painful, while trying to “do something”, the faces of people who block passage, the identity of those groups who have competing interests, and institutional power itself, [all] become more accessible to critical analysis by ordinary people. To act more effectively, one needs to better understand; to best see if that understanding is valuable, one uses it, acts on it. Ultimately, this leads to a permanent educational process of action and learning (p. 16).*

All of the Quebec family resource programs included in the study sample have both past and present links with the popular education movement.

## **Women’s Roles in Creating and Sustaining Community Programs**

Feminist analyses of social services and social policy have drawn attention to the important role that women have taken historically, and continue to take in the present, in creating and sustaining community programs. Women have been instrumental in identifying family and community needs and have come together to organize both informal help and more formal programs and services. They have also worked as staff, as volunteers, and taken a leadership role as Board members and advocates for programs and their communities. Women are also often the main recipients of service (Evans and Wekerle, 1997; Fraser, 1990; Gordon, 1990; Sassoon, 1987). Wiebe (1995) has documented, for example, the role that farm women’s groups played in Saskatchewan in advocating for better living conditions and better health care in the 1920s and 1930s. Their actions contributed to the initial development of Canada’s health care system. Groups such as the Women’s Institutes across the country and the *Cercle des Fermières* in Quebec have a long history of bringing women together for purposes of education, social support and community service.

In looking at the history of the family resource movement in Canada, there is clearly a sense in which many of these programs have grown out of women's needs to come together for social support and education and from their concern with making their communities safe and healthy places to raise children. Feminist-oriented family resource programs have developed as some women's resource centres and women's shelters have broadened their mandates to address the child-rearing concerns of their members. In British Columbia, for example, a number of the women's resource societies have taken on the task of sponsoring the child care resource and referral programs in their area. In Newfoundland, the Coalition to End Violence (an organization strongly supported by the local Status of Women's Council), was a co-sponsor of the Bay St. George Community Action Committee that initiated the development of family resource programs in the area.

While only a few of the cases in this research study appear to have a consciously feminist orientation (e.g., *Re-Nou-Vie* and North End Parent Resource Centre), many of the others were initially founded by women—by mothers groups or through the leadership of individual women. Women constitute the largest group of participants, aside from children, and the majority of volunteers and staff. Special funding and program initiatives are often targeted to high-risk, single-parent mothers. It is not so much that men/fathers are not welcomed or have no role to play, in fact, a number of programs make special efforts to include them. Rather, many of the programs offered are, in effect, a communal and more public extension of women's work of caring for their families and their concerns with child-rearing, child development, health, nutrition and food security. The holistic orientation and the broad focus that family resource programs bring to meeting family needs require a flexibility similar to that which characterizes women's carework (Waerness, 1987). Balbo (1987) has described women's carework as being analogous to the creation of a patchwork quilt—a creation that is not only useful, but also an expression of the spirit:

*...it has often occurred to me that to describe living conditions in contemporary society from a woman's perspective, the images and words of patchwork quilting are most appropriate: the endless sorting out and putting together of available resources, the minute coping strategies, the overall aim of survival, and the imagination, ingenuity and amount of work that these require (p. 45).*

There is an important sense in which the work of family resource programs can be seen as a patchwork quilt—putting together the pieces of different programs, making use of any available space and materials, and begging or borrowing other resources to create a holistic and flexible family support program. In a discussion with one of the researchers, a program representative used the analogy of making soup. She compared the adding on of a new program piece to adding a few more onions, carrots and water to the pot in the rural tradition of never turning anyone away hungry and of finding ways to extend whatever is available a little further. In family resource programs, new initiatives don't necessarily wait on the acceptance of funding proposals; they often begin with a strong sense of need followed by the reorganizing and reconstituting of existing resources to address community concerns. While this focus on nurturing and flexibility is part of the strength of women's programs, it is also a point where they are most vulnerable, for they do not always easily fit into formal, public frameworks and systems of accountability that characterize more traditional social services. If program staff are not careful, they can sometimes over-extend themselves and their resources, leading to serious burnout and ultimately a deterioration in the quality of services provided.

Discussing family resource programs from a perspective that constructs them as women's programs also begs the question of the role men may play. As suggested earlier, a focus on women's concerns related to caring for their families in effect mirrors the more general social split between men's and women's roles and family responsibilities. In both Canada and the United States, however, interest is growing in rethinking and revaluing men's roles as fathers and family members, and in finding programs and approaches that support and enhance their involvement. (See for instance, Family Resource Coalition, 1996; and the Dads Canada Initiative videos and publication [in press] entitled *Dads Under Construction*.) Some interesting examples of support to fathers can be found in the family resource programs selected for study.

## II. The Socio-economic Context

*During this period of rapid change, it is important to recognize the interdependence of economic and social development. Successful "new economies" will place a high premium on knowledge and innovation, which depend on a society's human resources. Failure to invest in all stages of human development, particularly the early years, will negatively affect future economic prosperity in two ways. First, we may lack the human resources needed to sustain further economic growth. Second we may increase the social burden arising from problems that begin early in an individual's development and that then create multiple costs for the individual and for society over time (Keating and Mustard, cited in Guy, 1997, p. 22).*

An ecological approach requires that children's and families' experiences be understood in the context of their communities and in relation to the broader social and economic policies and initiatives that directly and indirectly shape the circumstances of people's lives. The following is a brief summary of some of the current contextual factors that have a considerable impact both on the policy and funding context in which Canadian family resource programs currently function and on the needs experienced by the children and families they serve.

### Growth of Child and Family Poverty in Canada

Although the Canadian government passed a resolution in 1989 to work towards the elimination of poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000, since then, the estimated number of poor children has increased by 58%, from 943,000 poor children in 1989 to 1,472,000 in 1995. During this same period, the number of children living in families experiencing long-term unemployment increased by 47%; the number of children in families requiring social assistance increased by 68%; and the number of children living in unaffordable rental housing increased by 48% (Campaign 2000, 1997, p. 2-3). In cataloguing the risks associated with poverty, Campaign 2000's 1997 *Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada* noted that poor children are twice as likely to be born prematurely, have lower birth weights and higher rates of infant mortality. They are twice as likely to have low scores on school readiness tests and twice as likely to repeat a grade before the age of 11. They are also more likely to drop out of school and to face poor employment prospects. Paying more for housing means that poor families have less to spend on food; food banks have reported a 50% increase in use since 1989 (p. 6). Similar concerns were reported in the Canadian Council on Social Development's report *The Progress of Canada's Children, 1997*.

## Destabilization of Social Programs with the Demise of CAP

The Canada Assistance Plan defined the federal-provincial contract on cost-shared funding for social service (child welfare, child care) and social assistance programs for several decades and provided the foundation for Canada's social safety net. It was replaced in April 1996 by the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) block grant, which combined funding for social services and social assistance, health care and post-secondary education. Although this move to block funding allowed provincial governments greater flexibility to develop their own version of social programs, it removed incentives for provinces to meet minimum program standards and funding levels in specific program areas such as social assistance, and thereby paved the way for the introduction of workfare programs and the disqualification of certain categories of recipients in a number of jurisdictions (Moscovitch, 1997; National Council of Welfare, 1997).

In examining the conditions necessary for children's healthy development, Steinhauer (1997) has identified a number of social factors that are eroding support for parenting and for children:

- *persistent high levels of unemployment, underemployment and job insecurity*
- *the need to pay off the economic deficit and governments' tendency to do so in ways that aggravate the social deficit and increase inequity*
- *the reduction in federal transfer payments to provinces*
- *the changing relationship between federal and provincial governments which undermines the concept of national standards*
- *the tendency at all levels of government to avoid investing in programs if the benefits will not be obvious until long after the next election (p. 9).*

These changes to federal-provincial funding mechanisms for health, education and social programs were accompanied by a 14.2 % federal budget cut to social transfers between fiscal years 1994/95 and 1997/98, an overall reduction of \$4.2 billion. Additionally, there were cuts to (un)employment insurance, subsidized housing and welfare for Aboriginal people. The 1993 Redbook election promise to expand child care spaces never materialized (National Council of Welfare, 1997, p. 6). In many cases provincial cuts to social programs have occurred alongside reductions in federal funding. While the national impact of these funding cuts is only beginning to be felt, a July 1997 report by the United Way of Greater Toronto serving Canada's largest metropolitan area, noted, for example, that in the previous year its 140 member agencies lost \$14 million in government funding. Between 1995 and 1996, 54 social service agencies closed their doors in Metro Toronto. Cancellation of programs most commonly occurred in multi-service agencies and agencies serving children and youth. Reduced budgets most often affected community

development programs, drop-ins, immigration settlement services, supportive housing and education programs (United Way of Greater Toronto, 1997, p. 65-67).

In evaluating the potential impact of the change to the CHST, Rice (1995) suggested that the federal government has set the stage for a recreation of the 1930s depression scenario by weakening the ability of the federal government to work nationally to solve problems related to poverty:

*... the new funding mechanism provides no inducement for provinces to respond to the federal call to work together ... to solve difficult social welfare problems ... Regional disparities will inevitably worsen and the national safety net will disappear ... The greatest casualties will be ... those people who are most in need of the benefits provided under the old CAP mechanism: single parents, disabled people, the unemployed employables, and lower income families. These individuals are already living with minimal subsistence and the threat of lower benefits only worsens the stigma attached to welfare and the use of social services (p. 205-6).*

In response to growing concerns about child poverty, in 1997 the federal government, in conjunction with the provinces, announced the introduction of a National Child Benefit System (to begin July, 1998) to replace the current federal Child Tax Benefit, and a “Reinvestment Strategy”, in which provinces are to deduct the increased benefits from welfare payments. These “savings” are to be reinvested in other social programs such as child care, nutrition and labour market supports (Campaign 2000, 1997; National Council of Welfare, 1997).

Given the recent decline in welfare rates<sup>2</sup> and the growing levels of poverty in many provinces, these so-called savings are at best highly theoretical, and set up a contradictory situation where funds are to be “clawed back” from families on social assistance to pay for social programs. Unlike the Seniors Benefit, the Child Tax Benefit is not indexed. As a consequence, about 50,000 children annually lose their eligibility for the maximum benefit, so that its value for many families diminishes over time (Campaign 2000, 1997).

Alongside the federal changes, over the last few years many provincial governments have initiated major reviews and reforms to the funding and delivery of social programs such as social assistance, child welfare and child care. In provinces such as Ontario and Alberta, the reforms are part of an exercise to limit the number of people on social assistance in order to reduce government expenditures and lower taxes. In British Columbia, however, the reforms appear to have been sparked by an equal desire to create more responsive approaches to service delivery through the creation of a new Ministry for Children and Families. At the federal level, and in some provinces, responsibility for the administration of social services is being shifted to new ministries or departments, requiring the building of a whole new set of operating relationships and procedures for accountability. At a federal level, the introduction of the CHST, the focus on offering income security measures through the tax system, and the transformation of Health and Welfare Canada into Human Resources Development Canada and Health Canada have meant the loss of a social welfare presence. Doherty, Friendly, and Oloman (1998) in their review of the impact of the CHST on child care, refer to this marginalization in their remark that child care has “no home in the devolved, down-sized federal social policy framework.”

For many community-based family support programs the experience is one of being situated in shifting sands, as funding and reporting arrangements to various levels of government are being radically changed, often with little consultation or time for transition. In some provinces family resource programs have experienced cutbacks to funding with little advance notice. Many have also been caught in the trend towards the privatization and down-loading of social services onto the “community” without adequate preparation,

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2 The Canadian Council on Social Development (1997) reporting on the percentage change in provincial welfare benefits between 1986 and 1996 found, for example, that the welfare rates for a single parent with one child had decreased by 23.6% in Alberta, by 12.9% in Prince Edward Island, by 12.4% in Saskatchewan, and by 9.6% in Manitoba during that time—although the cost of living had not decreased. In Ontario the rates decreased by 17.9% between 1995 and 1996.

planning or funding to support them. At the same time, community-based programs are regularly experiencing demands for an increased range of services as they try to respond to the growing desperation of the families and communities they serve. For example, in a 1994 critique of New Brunswick's welfare reforms, Mullaly and Weinman comment:

*... through its policies of retrenchment and cutbacks, along with the lowest rates of welfare in the country, this government has pushed its responsibility down onto local communities to look after its poor by using such degrading charitable devices as soup kitchens, food banks, emergency shelters and clothing depots (p. 94).*

This example has been repeated in many other Canadian communities.

One of the most troubling aspects of these changes to social policy and funding for social programs is the way in which economic values and deficit reduction have come to dominate the social policy debate. Also of concern is the way in which the knowledge and experience of many community-based programs and their essential contribution to the social well-being of families and children have been marginalized and ignored. Novick and Shillington (1997) note the dissonance that exists between public concerns about growing disparities within the country in critical social areas (such as child poverty, youth unemployment, health care and education) and the current political discourse that narrowly focuses on calls for lower taxes. They also comment on the recent federal-provincial discussions to develop a framework for a "national children's agenda" and note that this framework is being developed by "closed groups of officials without the benefit of broader national consultations." Furthermore, they express concern about the lack of federal understanding that improving environments for children requires "the engagement of many sectors outside of governments to identify perspectives and approaches of significance" (p. 13).

What is equally of concern is that the economic agenda has often been pursued with a sense of meanness, attacking and blaming those who are most vulnerable and at risk. In the process their citizenship has been undermined by eroding basic social entitlements. Morrison (1997) notes for example, that in Ontario, the reductions to social assistance "must be understood as more than just reductions in available benefits and services. They are, in fact, a far ranging attack on entitlement to return those who cannot maintain 'independence' in the market, or who are not legitimately 'dependent' within families, to the status of charitable objects" dependent on the largess of society (p. 72). This has meant a shift from an understanding that "the main causes of need were structural, rooted in the nature of the economy and factors largely beyond individual control" to a "pre-welfare state ideology of poverty and need as based on individual inadequacy, whether this is expressed in the genteel language of 'skills deficits' or the welfare-bashing rhetoric of 'lazy scroungers'" (p. 70). Moscovitch (1997) has also pointed out that this shift has involved a turning away from established principles of collective responsibility:

*Canada's welfare laws since the 1960s have prohibited compulsory work for welfare and supported the principle that all people demonstrably in need should have access to social support. In reducing their eligibility, governments have moved further away from the principle that the community should support all people in need, not simply those whom the*

*government judges to be more deserving. In introducing workfare, they have contradicted the 30-year-old principle that desperate people should not be forced to take a job in order to get the support they need. In doing so, they have not found a new and more efficient way of running a welfare program. They have simply begun the process of returning us to the past (p. 90).*

Not only are these neo-conservative views of vulnerable families and children abhorrent; they signify a reversion to a deficit model and seriously contradict a number of basic family support principles. They are equally problematic in a political sense as programs that adopt a family support perspective must work very carefully to preserve their integrity with their program participants, while at the same time continue to meet the requirements of funders and governments that espouse different values.

### III. The Growth of Family Support Approaches in Canada

Despite the various pressures described above, in recent years family resource programs have emerged as the program model of choice in a number of Canadian approaches to primary prevention and the promotion of health and well-being. For example, many of the programs funded through the federal Community Action Program for Children, (CAPC) make considerable use of family resource principles and program models. In 1995/96, CAPC funding of \$34.5 million was provided to support the operation of approximately 470 projects; CAPC funding helped to support ten of the family resource programs included in the study sample. In 1997, the federal government introduced the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program which provided funding for food supplements, nutritional counselling and social support. In some provinces this program has been closely linked to the CAPC-funded family resource programs. In Ontario, the Better Beginnings, Better Futures projects in eleven communities also adopted a family resource program approach to working with families and children in high-risk communities. While there is no federal or provincial legislation specifically directed to enable prevention and the development of family resource and community support programs, there has been a growing interest in family support as part of government reviews and reorganization of social services in a number of provinces.

The growth in the number of family resource programs has led to the development of networks and associations in some parts of Canada. For example, the Ontario Association of Family Resource Programmes has established a network of about 475 member programs in five provincial regions. In British Columbia, the B.C. Association of Family Resource Programs includes Family Places and related services for children and families. In the Atlantic provinces, CAPC-funded programs meet regularly at the provincial level, and in Nova Scotia, have formed the Nova Scotia Association of Family Resource Projects. In Quebec, *la Fédération des unions de familles* facilitates networking among *Maisons de la famille*. Networks and associations also exist at the local level in some parts of Canada. For example, the Metro Association of Family Resource Programmes has been active in Toronto for many years and sponsors a biennial conference. More recently a network of family resource programs was formed in Calgary following a family resource conference held in 1996.

These various networks facilitate information-sharing among groups about program development issues, useful resource materials, training opportunities and funding sources. Networks also play a vital role in alerting

programs to the impact that government restructuring and changes to funding and policy have on children, families and communities. Many networks organize advocacy efforts in response to issues of concern to family resource programs. Some also organize training workshops and conferences to support professional development.

At the national level, the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP Canada) facilitates information-sharing and networking among programs and associations across Canada. FRP Canada maintains a national database of community-based programs, provides consultation on program development issues, supports professional development through a biennial conference, and develops publications and reports on issues related to family support. In collaboration with other national organizations, the Association also advocates on issues related to the well-being of families and children.

# CHAPTER 4

## Towards a Framework for Flexibility: Defining and Describing Family Resource Programs

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### I. Developing A Common Definition and Description

As outlined in Chapter 1, a major goal of this research has been to explore basic research questions about the nature and scope of family resource programs. Based on an analysis of the information collected in the case studies of fifteen Canadian family resource programs, this section of the report will concentrate on answering the following questions:

- What is a family resource program? Is it possible to come up with a definition that identifies common elements and incorporates basic principles, at the same time as it recognizes the need for flexibility and diversity, qualities that enable family resource programs to respond to varying family and community needs?
- What is the range of program components offered? Are there common program components?
- Is it possible to develop a framework that will organize and clearly articulate the complex range of program components identified?
- To what extent are there common organizational models?

There are a number of benefits that can result from developing a clear and detailed definition of what constitutes a family resource program. A common definition is a basic prerequisite for developing supportive government legislation, policy, and funding mechanisms; programs that cannot be described and accounted for cannot be funded. A common definition and listing of potential program components would also permit a systematic approach to quality assurance and program evaluation. Comparisons across family resource programs become more meaningful when their commonalities and differences can be identified and analyzed. Furthermore, aspects of programs which are now taken for granted or overlooked would become more visible. Family resource programs could also use a common definition and description as a tool to raise their profile and achieve greater awareness of their work among the general public, policy-makers and funders.

#### Obstacles to a Common Definition

Many practitioners working in family resource programs have been asked: What is a family resource program? What does it do? What programs does it offer? Answering those questions is never simple or straightforward.

Even among experienced practitioners, opinions vary considerably. A number of factors contribute to this difficulty:

- Family resource programs are diverse and offer a broad range of program components.
- Common terminology to describe program components is lacking.
- The ecological complexity of programs is difficult to portray.
- Some of the work done by family resource programs is taken for granted and lacks visibility.

A review of the research literature and other reports on family resource programs in both the U.S. and Canada, reveals no consensus at present about what constitutes a family resource program. Nonetheless, a number of areas of agreement can be found. Most definitions include a statement of purpose or general intent, as well as a description of program elements or components. Sometimes definitions also include a statement of practice principles or ways of working. Before proposing a working definition and list of program categories and components based on an analysis of information from the case studies, the following review will consider some of the characteristics and limitations of existing definitions. It will also illustrate some of the challenges noted above that are involved in developing a common definition. The review begins with a consideration of U.S. definitions, since some of these ideas were first articulated there.

## U.S. Definitions and Descriptions

In answering the question “What are family programs?”, Weissbourd and Kagan (1989) note that “the wide diversity of family support programs defies simple explanations.” At the most general level, “family support programs provide services to families that empower and strengthen adults in their role as parents, nurturers, and providers” (p. 21). In the U.S. research literature, the terms “family resource” and “family support” seem to be used interchangeably to apply to the same kinds of programs, although the term “family support” appears to dominate. For example, Weiss (1989) begins her article: “Family support and education—or family resource—programs represent a new way of working with families to empower and reinforce them in their development” (p. 32). Dunst (1995) discusses the lack of a common terminology at length, pointing out that various combinations of terms are used to refer to family support programs: family support, education (and parent education), community-based, early intervention, family-centred. (Interestingly, he doesn’t use the term “family resource”.) He argues for making more precise distinctions and developing clearer definitions of family support programs.<sup>1</sup>

According to Weissbourd and Kagan (1989), family resource programs usually include one or more of the following program “activities”:

- a) *parent education and support groups*
- b) *parent-child joint activities that focus on child development and promote healthy family relationships*
- c) *a drop-in centre, which offers unstructured time for families to be with other families and with program staff on an informal basis*

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<sup>1</sup> Dunst’s monograph, *Key Characteristics and Features of Community-based Family Support Programs* (1995) also contains an interesting discussion of the major parameters of family support programs.

- d) *child care while parents are engaged in other activities offered by the family resource program*
- e) *information and referral to other services in the community including child care, health care, nutrition programs and counselling*
- f) *home visits, generally designed to introduce hard-to-reach families to family support programs*
- g) *health and nutrition education for parents and developmental checks or health screening for infants and children (p. 21).*

What is interesting about this list is that the “activities” are grouped using several different conceptual categories, for example: by function or purpose (health and nutrition education), by activity (parent-child joint activities), or by program type (a drop-in centre, which usually is a site for a number of program components and activities).

The Family Resource Coalition (1995) has a more complicated explanation of family support programs that begins with a discussion of the common principles and assumptions of family support practice. These basic premises include an holistic approach to families, a focus on prevention, and an emphasis on empowering and enabling adults as parents, nurturers and providers. While recognizing the diversity of programs in terms of settings, auspices, program content and structure, the Family Resource Coalition suggests that family support programs typically include the following program components:

- *Life skills training: including family literacy, education, employment or vocational training, or enhancement of personal development skills such as problem solving, stress reduction, and communication*
- *Parent information classes and support groups: offering instruction in child development and opportunities for parents to share their experiences and concerns with peers*
- *Parent-child groups and family activities, that provide occasions for parents to spend more time with their children*
- *Drop-in time to provide parents with informal opportunities to spend time with staff members and other parents*
- *Information and referral services*
- *Crisis intervention and family counselling to respond to parents’ special concerns about their children or specific family issues*
- *Auxiliary support services such as clothing exchanges, emergency food, and transportation (p. 1-2).*

In this description, program components are again grouped according to function (crisis intervention), by activity (family activities), or by program type (information and referral). The Family Resource Coalition description also broadens the potential scope of family resource programs because it contains several additional program categories that were not referred to in the Weissbourd and Kagan description, i.e., life skills training and auxiliary support services.

The problem with this description of “typical program components”, as with the earlier Kagan and Weissbourd definition, is that there are no standard conceptual categories: program components are described by function, by program activities and by program type. This switching of conceptual categories in describing programs can lead to a lack of clarity about the nature and scope of the work being carried out. Inadequate definitions and descriptions of family resource programs may also create confusion and lead to policy and funding decisions that seriously underestimate the extent and number of program elements.

## Canadian Definitions and Descriptions

Canadian definitions and descriptions of family resource programs are equally problematic and have many of the same conceptual limitations. Research about Canadian programs has been extremely limited. Most practitioners have had little opportunity to develop a common understanding about what constitutes a family resource program. Developing a consensus has also been difficult because Canadian programs vary considerably due to their differing regional origins, influences and experiences. The following definitions, proposed by three different Canadian groups, illustrate the nature of the discussion to date.

*Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs - The Association's 1994 Status Report on Family Resource Programs Across Canada* (1995) noted that: “while no clear definition exists which is accepted across the country, in general, family resource programs may be identified by their principles, their functions, and their activities (i.e., program components)” (Kellerman and Williams, p. 17). Based on a survey of over 550 Canadian programs, the report noted that the *most common* program components offered by the groups surveyed included:

- *playgroups and drop-in programs*
- *parent support groups*
- *parenting courses and workshops*
- *toy, equipment and resource libraries*
- *mutual aid initiatives such as community kitchens and babysitting co-operatives*
- *special events for adults and children*
- *respite care, and child care while parents/caregivers participate in programs*
- *information, support and training for caregivers*
- *information about child care options and available services (including child care registries)*
- *resources for child care and social service professionals*
- *information and referral services*
- *‘warm’ lines (non-crisis telephone support)*
- *crisis intervention and counselling (including informal and peer counselling)*
- *‘special needs’ services (e.g. pregnancy and post-natal support for teen mothers; infant development services; support groups for survivors of family violence)*
- *home visits*
- *community development initiatives (including planning and advocacy for children’s and family services) (pp. 21-22)*

The Status Report description of family resource programs in many respects resembles the definition suggested by the U.S. Family Resource Coalition. Although some Canadian programs offered life skills and auxiliary support

services (such as food banks and clothing exchanges), these did not appear among the most common program components. Another difference in Canada seems to be the greater development of child care and child care support program components, such as child care centres; information, support and training to family day care providers; and other information and resources for parents, providers and child care professionals. As in the U.S. definitions, there is a mix of program categories, for example: by function (community development initiatives), by program type (“warm” lines), and by activities (special events for adults and children).

*Calgary Healthy Start Alliance* - This Calgary group, a collaborative association of services and community groups concerned with young children, held a conference in 1996 to discuss the nature of family resource programs. Noting that there was no simple definition of a family resource program, participants nevertheless identified a number of common characteristics. Their most recent definition is:

*Family Resource Programs are located in high needs neighbourhoods and are operated for and by local citizens. A Family Resource Program is easily accessible to families. It is a place to have fun and get /give help without strings or stigma. It is mutual self-help with professionals invited in to offer help when and where it is needed. It is a collection place for people, information, and services. There is a strong focus on safety, accessibility, social support, meeting basic needs, mutual respect, community enhancement, positive modelling, and skill/knowledge development.*

*Family Resource Programs offer direct help with child development, parenting, and family management as well as instrumental supports (e.g., clothing, food, community kitchens, babysitting co-ops and toy-lending libraries) and positive links with a wide variety of community groups and agencies (Fixen, 1997, p. 55).*

This definition focuses on values and practice principles related to community ownership of programs. It does not really attempt to describe the range of services provided except at the most general functional level, i.e., support with “child development, parenting and family management.” The reference to “high needs neighbourhoods” is limiting because it does not take into account that all families—regardless of social or economic status—may experience a need for social support. While avoiding the awkwardness of a long list of program components, this definition obscures the wide range of components that can fall under the general category of support for child development or parenting.

*Windsor Resource Group* - This group of Windsor-area programs described family resource centres as part of its response to the Children’s Services Restructuring Process initiated by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Its description includes services to family day care providers, reflecting the fact that the Ontario government has tended to view family resource centres as an extension of child care services. A number of them are provincially managed and funded under that program stream.

*Family resource centres encompass a wide array of community-based non-profit centres and/or services that support parents and caregivers as well as other members of the community, through the provision of information, public education, consultation and specialized program delivery. The often unique and varied services included under the umbrella of resource centres ranges from pure information sources to the primary prevention/early intervention programs ... located in*

*“high risk” neighbourhoods. Whatever the service, all are linked by an underlying philosophy of non-judgemental support to families with young children and to other care providers ... Experience has taught us that the success of family resource programs lies in the fact that they are non-intrusive and non-judgemental in their [service] delivery. They are viewed as non-threatening “entry level” programs where trust is built and motivation encouraged for high risk participants to access more specialized prevention and treatment programs if necessary (Windsor Resource Group, 1997, p. 1).*

In listing the services its member programs provide, the Windsor Resource Group includes “one or any combination” of the following: 1. parent/caregiver education and information; 2. a lending library, with toys, videos, cassettes, books and equipment; 3. playgroups, with parents/caregivers focusing on children’s play, or on-site playgroups allowing adults to attend educational sessions; 4. a child care registry assisting parents to obtain child care; 5. a warm line offering support to children who are home alone or caring for younger siblings; and 6. a drop-in centre “that encourages positive adult/child interaction, peer support, and access to resources and information to enhance healthy development” (p. 2-7).

The Windsor definition is similar to the other definitions that have been examined: it includes a number of value statements and practice principles, as well as a list of six common service areas. Once again, this list mixes program categories and includes functions (parent/ caregiver education), program types (drop-in centre) and activities (playgroups). The Windsor group’s definition also contains a number of references to high-risk neighbourhoods and participants, likely because of the funding context.

## The Lack of Common Terminology

Practitioners in the family resource field frequently note the lack of a common language available to describe programs and activities. Sometimes very similar program components are called by different names because of the different terms, concepts and emphases that practitioners trained in different disciplines bring to their work. For example, early childhood educators may emphasize more child-focused concepts and language; social workers may focus more on adults; health professionals may bring concepts based on a more traditional medical model. Sometimes programs are named (and periodically renamed) to reflect the current “flavour-of-the-month” priority, in order to attract funding or other support. Variations in language may also be a function of the grassroots nature of programs and their relative isolation from one another. Many programs try to give “catchy” names to activities, to attract participants or for promotional purposes. They are not necessarily concerned with using a formal, descriptive title.

Even at the most fundamental descriptive level there is a confusion about basic terms. In writing this report the researchers have become acutely aware of the lack of precision associated with common terms such as “program”, “service”, “family support”, or “community”. For example, the term “program” is used variously to refer to a whole organization as in family resource *program*; to functional categories, as in a parent education or an employment support *program*; and to specific program components, as in referring to a family day care service or an *halte-garderie* as child care/child development *program components*. The terms “programs” (in Canada, sometimes spelled programmes) and “services” also tend to be used interchangeably. Whatever the technical distinction that originally existed between programs and services, it has long since ceased to be applied in any

rigorous manner. The terms “family support” and “community” are also used in multiple ways that may obscure their underlying complexity and take for granted certain aspects of the work involved.

Sometimes the problem is that the language necessary to describe emerging programs and ways of working is still evolving. For example, there is no clear language to convey what the researchers have ended up calling a meeting place.<sup>2</sup> It is used to refer to an unstructured setting that offers a comfortable and casual entry point for people to learn more about a family resource program. Activities vary from day to day depending on who comes and what is going on in the neighbourhood. While meeting places have some of the characteristics of a drop-in, participants may include anyone in the neighbourhood, not just parents, caregivers and young children. Although children are often included, the physical environment may not be formally set up to facilitate children’s play.

The researchers also encountered problems with the names of programs that offered part-time or occasional child care. Distinctions are often not clear as to what is called parent relief, respite, or emergency child care. Occasional child care offered to enable parents to take part in adult program activities was called “child sitting” in Peterborough and “child-minding” in B.C. (based on a British term for unregulated child care), although many of these programs consciously include a number of child development activities. While *halte-garderies* in Quebec do provide occasional or part-time child care, to refer to them as child-minding services does not fully convey the nature of their operation.

## Difficulty in Portraying the Ecological Complexity of Programs

Conceptual difficulties in describing family resource programs arise in part because most of the existing frameworks are linear, categorical and fairly static and so do not accommodate the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of ecological approaches. For example, social service programs are typically described categorically, by discipline (health, nutrition, child care), by problem focus (special needs, child abuse, family violence), or age group (children, youth, teen mothers). When using an ecological approach, it is extremely difficult to find categories that are discrete, because of the systemic, interwoven nature of program delivery and the multiple participants/consumers of service (children, parents, caregivers). Program components often have multiple purposes and can be listed under more than one category. The paradigm shift from a deficit to a preventive approach involves a more holistic way of organizing services and a move to more empowering practices. However, the way programs are described, the language used and the mechanisms for accountability have not fully kept pace with this new complexity.

## Invisibility of Certain Program Activities

In developing the program profiles, the researchers noted that sometimes family resource programs take certain kinds of activities for granted and thus may not document this work. This may happen especially when activities and program components are not formally funded, when new program elements are emerging, or where funding criteria contradict community needs. For example, many programs offer support to and share resources with community groups by providing meeting space, helping to write funding proposals and making available a

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<sup>2</sup> See for example *le Carrefour familial Hochelaga* and the North End Parent Resource Centre.

computer, a fax machine or a photocopier. Because resources are often borrowed from a number of program areas, the work involved may not always be documented—yet it requires staff time and materials. On occasion, program representatives may find it useful to be somewhat obscure about the range of services offered so that they are able to respond more flexibly to community needs without appearing to contradict funding guidelines. A downside of adopting this strategy is that the work actually being carried out does not get recognized or adequately funded.

## II. Towards a Working Definition

The following section of the report will present a working definition and a listing of family resource program categories and components that have been built up inductively from an analysis of data collected from the case studies. The researchers have chosen to put forward a “working” definition, because a number of unresolved issues remain that require further discussion and clarification. The proposed working definition and the listing of program categories and components are not prescriptive, and do not set out specific boundaries or requirements. Rather, they are offered as a framework to suggest the possible scope of more evolved and established family resource programs. As with earlier definitions, some general value statements about the way in which family resource programs work have also been included.

As noted earlier, the fifteen family resource programs included in the present study were selected to capture as broad a range of program elements and approaches as possible. The family resource programs referred to themselves by a variety of names such as a *Family (or Parent) Resource Centre*, a *Family Place*, or *Family (Enrichment) Centre*, a *Maisonnette des parents* (parents’ house), or a *Carrefour familial* (family meeting place). Some of the family resource programs operated as separate or independent organizations. Others were part of larger multi-service community organizations providing a wide range of community and social services. Their origins and auspices were also varied. Sponsors included parent and community groups, boards of education, child care programs, a women’s centre, a community health centre, a neighbourhood house, a native friendship centre and the Military Family Support Program of the Department of National Defence.

Some of the programs studied served a single neighbourhood; others provided services to a number of communities at a district or county level, often through mobile programs or working from satellite locations. They operated out of many different kinds of facilities including community centres, church basements, child care centres, schools, libraries, apartment buildings, store-front locations, a hospital, a seniors residence, a residence for physically-challenged adults and a shopping mall. While exceedingly diverse, what brings these various programs together under the family support umbrella is that they hold in common a number of shared values and assumptions about the need to support families in raising their children and to foster healthy communities for them to live in.

## Working Definition

The following definition and description of family resource programs has been developed based on information from the case studies sample:

Family resource programs are multi-service, non-profit, community-based programs that promote social support, co-operation, collective responsibility (civic mindedness) and citizenship through offering a mix of education, information, activities, material support and other resources to family members and groups of families across a number of service areas. These service areas may include parent/caregiver education, family preservation, child care and development, health and safety, food and nutrition, recreation, life skills, employment support and community economic development, housing, literacy, and community education and leadership development. The range of services offered by family resource programs varies depending on their stage of organizational development, their specific community context, their assessment of community needs and on available resources. Not all services are offered by every family resource program, nor are they necessarily provided directly, but may be offered in partnership through co-operation and collaboration with other local groups and services.

Family resource programs are concerned as much with how they work with families as with the specific program components they deliver. They strive to work in a holistic way that takes into account the systemic and interdependent nature of families' lives and the way families and their members are affected by the communities in which they live. Programs are also characterized by their conscious attention to family support principles which focus on prevention and the promotion of well-being, and seek to foster individual, family and community strengths. Through advocating with or on behalf of families, and actively taking part in or facilitating local social planning and community development efforts, family resource programs work to strengthen community life.

## Definition of terms

To aid in understanding the working definition and the discussions which follow, it is useful to clarify a number of terms:

- *caregiver* - is used in a generic sense and may refer to parents, relatives, foster parents and supplementary child care providers of various kinds.
- *family* - assumes a family exists across the lifespan and includes extended family members, i.e., children, teens, parents, seniors and other relatives. The following definition of the family by the Vanier Institute of the Family (1994) captures the meaning of family that is intended:

*Family is defined as any combination of two or more persons who are bound together by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption/placement and who, together assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following:*

- *physical maintenance and care of group members*
- *addition of new members through procreation or adoption*
- *socialization of children*
- *social control of members*
- *production, consumption and distribution of goods and services*
- *affective nurturance—love (p. 10)*

- *social support* - refers to both the informal supportive relationships that exist among families, friends, neighbours and others (often described as personal social networks), as well as the more formal programs and resources available in a community to facilitate the development of informal support or to offer assistance when informal resources are insufficient.
- *community* - The Family Resource Coalition notes that “community” in the context of family support practice has three different meanings: 1. the geographic location of a family resource program and the area in which participating families reside (often referred to as neighbourhoods); 2. a group of people who share an affiliation such as a culture, religion, or share a common set of beliefs, values or interests; and 3. a group of people who support each other for the good of the whole group, including a sense of collective responsibility towards one’s neighbours (based on Family Resource Coalition, 1996, p. 71).
- *citizenship* - refers to various aspects of civic mindedness and collective responsibility that recognize the importance of strengthening communities and the way voluntary contributions made by program participants help to make this happen. Citizenship is also related to the family support principles of mutuality and interdependence. Participants exercise their citizenship by giving various kinds of support to each other, by offering their time, leadership and other resources to the program, and by working together as a group to improve the quality of life in their community. Communities are strengthened by addressing community concerns such as safety and violence, or through advocacy concerning social needs, inequities and injustice, and by creating opportunities for family members to contribute to community building. (For further discussion, see Chapter 7.)

### III. Program Components Found in the Case Studies

The researchers were aware of the richness and complexity of family resource programs prior to beginning the study; in fact this complexity was one of the reasons for documenting the work of family resource programs. Nonetheless, the number and range of program components found in the study sample was greater than anticipated. Over one hundred diverse program components were identified. The list, which appears on pp. 58-59, was developed by analyzing the program components section of the program profiles.

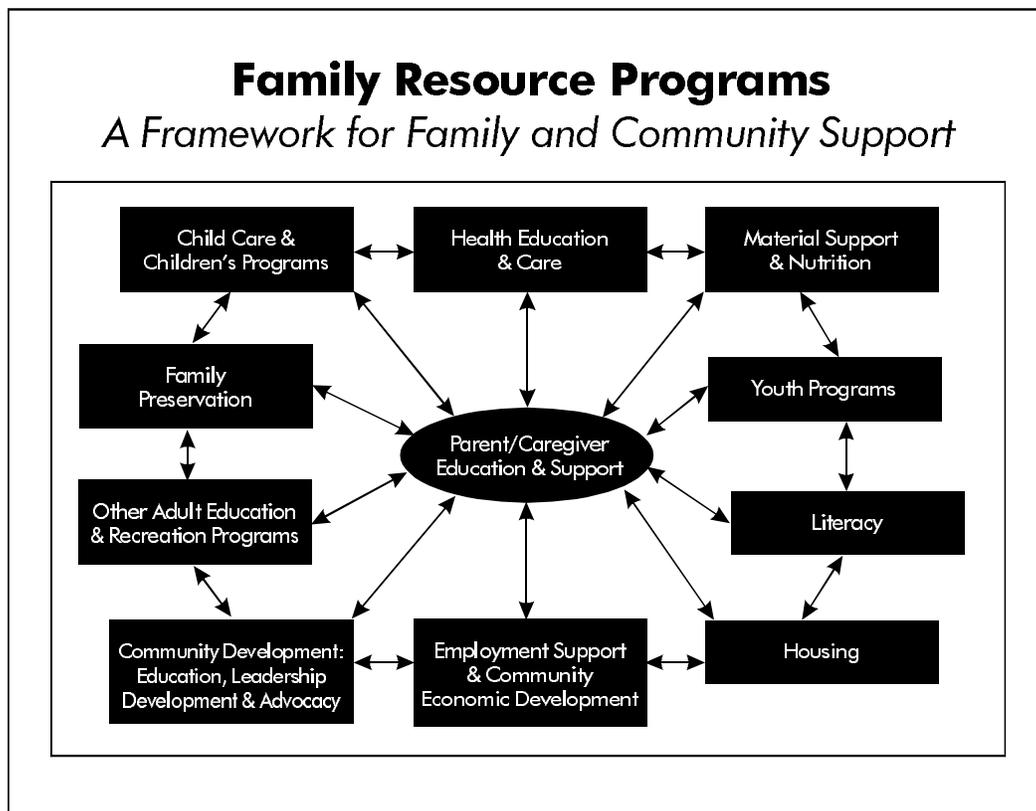
#### Major Categories of Program Components Offered by Programs in the Case Studies Sample

- Parent/Caregiver education and support
- Family preservation
- Child care and children’s programs
- Health education and care
- Material support and nutrition
- Housing
- Youth programs
- Literacy
- Employment support and community economic development
- Other adult education and recreation programs
- Community development: education, leadership development and advocacy

To provide order and to facilitate comparisons between programs, the researchers have grouped the program components into eleven more general functional categories to indicate the wide variety of ways family resource programs support families. Some of these categories (and the program components they contain) could logically be subsumed under other categories. For example, some literacy programs could be grouped under children’s or youth programs. Some youth program components could be grouped under employment support. In this analysis, the researchers have created some categories to draw attention to the presence of certain kinds of program components. Under other circumstances, and for other purposes, it would be possible to develop a somewhat different but equally valid set of categories.

It should be noted that this listing of program categories and program components is the result of a linear attempt to describe them. In practice, a number of program components are usually closely interwoven and interlinked. For example, a project to serve teen mothers would usually combine program components across several program categories. It might include parent education workshops, parent/child activities that included child observation and supervised play, home visits, nutrition supplements, participation in a collective kitchen, and/or a life skills program. Sometimes, school-based licensed child care would be provided to teen mothers to help them finish high school. Staff may also assist teen parents to gain access to other resources, for instance, subsidized housing, should the need arise. With a wide range of resources to draw on, program staff are in a better position to tailor their responses to meet specific individual and family needs.

The figure below suggests some of the systemic linkages between program categories; together the program categories offer a framework for family and community support.



In developing the list of program components, the researchers encountered a number of the conceptual difficulties referred to earlier, such as the variability of terminology and the tendency to refer to program components and activities as the same thing. While conscious of these limitations, the researchers found no simple way to resolve them. Consequently, certain types of program components are listed under more than one category (for example, drop-ins for parents, caregivers and children and drop-ins for teens and youths). In this case, while the name is the same and some of the underlying concepts are similar, in practice, parent drop-ins and teen drop-ins are quite different programs. They require separate staff and resources and involve different activities. Similarly,

## Program Components Offered in the Case Studies Sample

### Parent/Caregiver Education and Support:

- Community meeting place, reception area
- Drop-ins for parents, caregivers, and children
- Playgroups and child development activities
- Parent education with children present, (supervised child play and observation)
- Parenting education courses, workshops
- Information and referral, including newsletters, monthly calendars
- Warm lines
- Toy- and equipment-lending library
- Resource library
- Mobile toy and equipment lending, information, resources and other support
- Support groups (e.g., for step and blended families, single mothers/fathers, parents of teens, grandparents, military families whose relatives are deployed)
- Family events and activities
- Family camps
- Supervised visiting for estranged families, court-ordered visits
- Translation services for newcomers

### Family Preservation:

- Outreach/home visiting by peers and staff
- In-home support and education, teaching various life skills
- Short-term counselling, mediation, referral and support
- Parent/family counselling (longer-term)
- Emergency and crisis intervention
- Education and counselling about family law, family violence, separation and divorce

### Child Care and Children's Programs:

- Nursery school and half-day child development programs (e.g., Head Start, kindergarten preparation, parent co-ops)
- Child care centres for children of all ages; also school-based centres for teen parents
- Regulated family day care; registration of license not required providers
- Support and training for all family day care providers
- Child care hub (shared administration, resources, staff support)

- Outreach and home-visiting support by a family worker to families using child care
- Formal support and training to promote integration of children with special needs
- Short-term, occasional child care: by *halte-garderies*, school break programs, summer camps; also parent breaks, parent relief, respite and emergency child care (in group, family day care and drop-in settings)
- Rural/seasonal child care programs
- Child minding to support other family resource and community programs
- Child care information and referral, help with obtaining subsidies
- Recreation programs
- Education program about self-care for children home alone

### Health Education and Care:

- Health screening, well-child, family health clinics
- Prenatal, childbirth education and support including home visiting
- Breastfeeding support group
- Immunization clinics
- Post-natal support and education

### Material Support and Nutrition:

- Prenatal nutrition education, individual consultations, food supplements
- Nutrition education groups and community kitchens; teaching and canning kitchens
- Snacks
- Breakfast and lunch programs, community dinners, supper clubs
- Kindergarten milk program
- Food-buying club and bulk food purchasing
- Food banks and food distribution
- Food vouchers
- Food-bingo programs
- Clothing exchanges
- Furniture distribution
- Laundry facilities
- Hairdressing services
- Free telephone access

**Housing:**

- Temporary housing for men/families
- Re-settlement housing for new immigrants
- Subsidized family housing

**Youth Programs:**

- Drop-in programs offering a variety of activities
- Social and recreational groups
- Summer activity programs
- After school programs
- Outreach and support services, youth/parent mediation
- Support to students with educational and social problems at an alternate school
- High school upgrading for out-of-school teens
- Information and referral
- Babysitter training courses
- Court diversion program
- Suicide prevention and awareness education
- Youth leaders training program
- Co-op/volunteer work placements for elementary and high school students
- Education/career forums for youth
- School-based resource room for parents of teens

**Literacy:**

- ESL and other literacy programs for children
- Language instruction, courses for adults
- Homework help, tutoring
- Family literacy (e.g., Books for Babies, reading to young children, connecting with libraries)
- Adult upgrading and literacy
- Educational scholarships

**Employment Support and Community Economic Development:**

- Career awareness/work orientation education
- Life skills, pre-employment counselling, job search skills (both short and longer-term programs)
- Information and referral to employment counselling
- Job-finding clubs
- Pre-employment skills training and courses for specific jobs
- Immigrant youth employment outreach

- Computer clubs; other computer literacy training
- Training and orientation for family day care providers
- Youth employment counselling and practical job experience
- Adult work placements
- Community college and university student practicums
- Compulsory short-term life skills, career counselling for welfare recipients
- Training and occasionally hiring of community residents to work in the program
- Workfare placements to supplement the work of resource centre staff
- Job creation (e.g., catering co-op, house repairs and renovations co-op, cleaning co-op, women's sewing group, delivery and light trucking business)

**Other Adult Education and Recreation Programs:**

- Workshops, discussion groups on a variety of topics
- Recreation, arts and crafts, sewing
- Personal growth, exploration groups
- Weekend vacations, retreats
- Multicultural diversity education and promotion

**Community Development: Education, Leadership Development and Advocacy:**

- Support to community groups, child care provider networks (e.g. sharing space and various resources)
- Formal and informal volunteer training and leadership development
- Organization of and participation in a variety of conferences
- Organization of community forums on selected topics
- Community communication through various media (e.g., cable TV and television forums, informational videos, local newspaper column)
- Initiation of and participation in research
- Preparation of information manuals, resource materials
- Public and funder education; participation in community planning and development, advocacy, preparation of briefs, other information

home-visiting program components are listed under three categories (family preservation, child care, and health education and care) because they occurred in each of those areas. Home visiting is not an activity that occurs in isolation; it is closely attached to a specific program area, and is a means for strengthening connections between a program and the families who participate.

Despite its limitations, this list of program components is useful for a number of reasons. It highlights the fact that in the family resource programs selected for study, program components are oriented across the lifespan, serving not only parents with young children, but also older children and youths. Some of the larger family resource programs in the study sample also offered a variety of programs and services to seniors and other adults. Examples are Penticton & District Community Resources Society, Chilliwack Community Services, and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society. East York/East Toronto Family Resources is co-located with an agency that provides extensive seniors and community services. While these seniors/adult services were not included in the list of program components, they are briefly noted in the program profiles. Some adult education and recreation programs were included in the list, however, because they were specifically developed to meet adult caregivers' needs for personal growth and development.

The list also makes clear that the potential range of program components is much broader than suggested by a number of earlier descriptions of family resource programs. For instance, while some other definitions briefly mention various material support and nutrition programs, the program component list indicates the considerable number of food-related program components that were being offered by the case studies sample. Finally, the list suggests the range of program categories and components that might be coordinated or linked if communities wish to develop more comprehensive family support programs.

## Most Common Program Components

As noted earlier, the above list is not intended to suggest that it is necessary to offer a certain number and range of program components in order to be considered a family resource program. None of the programs selected for study offered the full list of program components. Since they were relatively well-established, however, they did tend to have more program components than might be present if a representative sample of family resource programs was surveyed. Because of the selection criteria, child care programs were also over-represented.

Some of the program categories listed—such as housing and certain kinds of employment support and community economic development programs—were found much less frequently. Family resource programs that included these components recognized that the lack of affordable housing and jobs posed serious barriers to family well-being. They were also in a position to obtain the financial resources and technical support necessary to develop these services.

Program representatives made it clear that their family resource program offered specific program components in response to their own community's circumstances: its needs, the program's length of operation, and available resources (i.e., existing services and funding opportunities). In general, family resource programs grew over time, gradually piecing together the specific program components that met participants' needs, so as to work co-operatively and productively in their own communities. In practice, family resource programs serving rural areas pieced together the programs they needed differently from those serving inner-city neighbourhoods.

Family resource programs sponsored by women’s groups evolved differently and offered different family support programs than those affiliated with schools. For example, women’s centres usually have programs concerning family violence; they are less common in schools.

The following list of the most common program components puts the question of scope into some perspective. Each component was offered by at least half of the family resource programs in the study sample. The approximately two dozen components fall into six program categories:

**Most Common Program Components Offered in the Case Studies Sample**

<p><b>Parent/Caregiver education and support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drop-in programs for parents, caregivers and children</li> <li>• playgroups and other child development activities</li> <li>• information and referral (about general topics, and child care related)</li> <li>• parenting education courses and workshops</li> <li>• toy libraries</li> <li>• resource libraries</li> <li>• support groups of various kinds</li> <li>• family events and activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Family preservation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outreach through home visiting</li> <li>• support and follow-up for individual concerns</li> <li>• short-term counselling, mediation, referral and support</li> </ul> <p><b>Child care and children’s programs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• licensed group child care</li> <li>• support and training for home child care providers (regulated and independent)</li> <li>• child minding to support other family resource and community programs</li> <li>• before and after school programs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Material support and nutrition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nutrition education groups and community kitchens</li> <li>• snacks, breakfast, lunch, supper programs and community dinners</li> <li>• clothing exchanges</li> </ul> <p><b>Other adult education and recreation programs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workshops, discussion groups on a variety of topics (other than parent education)</li> </ul> <p><b>Community development:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support to community groups and child care provider networks, by sharing space, equipment and other resources</li> <li>• formal and informal volunteer training and leadership development</li> <li>• initiating and participating in research and evaluation</li> <li>• preparation of information manuals, resource materials</li> <li>• public and funder education and awareness; advocacy with and on behalf of children and families</li> <li>• participation in community planning, and various other community development efforts</li> </ul>
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It is interesting that whole program categories are missing from this list: health education and care, youth programs, literacy, housing, and employment support and community economic development. In the case of health education and care, it appears that while many family resource programs work collaboratively with public health services, health services still operate fairly categorically and so are not always integrated into family resource programs. Program representatives also reported that funding for public health nurses has been drastically cut back in many parts of the country, so that nurses do not have the resources to participate directly in programs. Despite these limitations, there is considerable evidence of co-operation between public health and family resource programs in the community linkages sections of the profiles.

Program components directed to youth are less common, probably because primary prevention efforts tend to focus on families with young children. Moreover, young people are often an invisible group when it comes to planning social services. Most of the literacy programs in the sample were associated with family resource programs affiliated with schools (e.g., Port au Port Community Education Initiative, Dundurn Military Family Resource Centre), with programs offering employment support and life skills training (e.g., Moncton Early Family Intervention Program, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House), or with those serving communities which included Aboriginal populations and/or a number of new immigrants (e.g., Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Chilliwack Community Services).

Employment support, community economic development and housing program components are much rarer, and tend to be found in the larger, most experienced family resource programs and multi-service agencies.

## IV. Models of Family Resource Programs

Just as there is no clear definition of family resource programs, there are also no clearly delineated models. In recent reports, for example, the U.S. Family Resource Coalition (1996) has proposed five major categories of family support programs:

1. *programs that provide comprehensive collaborative services* - These are large programs working at the neighbourhood level that assist families with basic economic needs, housing and job training, as well as enhancing parenting skills.
2. *programs linked to school success* - Services are designed to support parents' involvement in their children's education; they often collaborate with other community services to support families.
3. *programs that seek to enhance parenting skills and family functioning* - These programs are found in drop-in centres, seminars and workshops in a variety of settings and seek to build parents' skills and confidence in rearing their children.
4. *family support as a component of other services* - A family support approach is used to provide other family services, for example, violence prevention, child care, services to families of children with special needs, promotion of family literacy and parent programs in the workplace.
5. *statewide family support initiatives* - In the U.S. some state governments have developed initiatives aimed at integrating services for families, or at providing prevention services for certain targeted families. Family support programs and services are adopted as a way to meet their goals. These initiatives usually have multiple sites, standardized program goals and outcome expectations, and staff trained in a common curriculum (based on Family Resource Coalition, 1996, pp. 2-3).

Although Canadian analysis of the different types of family resource programs has been limited, examples of the first four categories proposed by the Family Resource Coalition can be found in the study sample and among other family resource programs offered in Canada. The last major Coalition category—statewide family support initiatives—has no completely comparable Canadian provincial equivalent. There have been more limited provincial initiatives, such as the development of the child care support centres under the Ontario Child Care Initiatives in the 1980s and in 1993, the appointment of seven family resource coordinators by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. The federal Community Action Program for Children, sponsored by Health Canada and managed jointly by the federal, provincial and territorial governments also bears some similarity to

this last category. CAPC is currently funding 474 projects in 316 communities to address the developmental needs of children 0–6 years of age who are living in “conditions of risk.” Included in the services are: “parent training, home visits, one-on-one child development intervention, mobile units to isolated and rural areas, moms and tots programs, headstart programs, collective kitchens and traditional Aboriginal healing programs” (Health Canada, nd., c. 1996, p. 1). Ten of the family resource programs in the study sample received some CAPC funding to support their work.

The organizational structure adopted by the individual family resource programs in the current study seemed to be fairly idiosyncratic. A number of factors influenced the approach they adopted: their sponsoring group(s), their particular history (including disciplinary origins, mandates, and intended scope), and their assessment of local needs and available resources. What was most impressive was the way in which the programs studied succeeded in coordinating a wide range of internal program components—sometimes across a district or in a number of communities. In addition, many of them had developed partnerships with other agencies and community groups to collectively tackle specific issues of local concern.

The following three categories are proposed to reflect the kinds of “models” that have been developed in the case studies sample. They are not entirely discrete because some family resource programs can fall under several organizational categories. Some are similar to the categories proposed by the U.S. Family Resource Coalition, but mainly focus mainly on organizational structure:

- *Family resource centres whose main purpose is to serve a single neighbourhood or community* - Examples are Andrews Street Family Centre, Dundurn Military Family Resource Centre, *la Maisonnnette des Parents*, *le Carrefour familial Hochelaga*, North End Parent Resource Centre, *Re-Nou-Vie*. Although Moncton Early Family Intervention Program falls into this category in some respects, most of its program components are directed to high-risk families.
- *Family resource programs nested in and integrated with larger multi-service agency programs* - Examples are the Family Places and other family and children’s programs in Chilliwack Community Services, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Penticton & District Community Resources Society, and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society.
- *Satellite programs coordinated and administered by a central resource base, or a network of family support programs* - Examples are Chilliwack Community Services (Communities for Children and Families Coalition), East York/East Toronto Family Resources, Penticton & District Community Resources Society, Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre, Port au Port Community Education Initiative and South East Grey Community Outreach. These satellite programs can include programs offered out of permanent sites as well as those offered by mobile programs that operate out of temporary (usually borrowed) space.

## V. Questions of Scope and Boundary Setting

When services are offered categorically, definitions of purpose and scope are relatively straightforward. For example, a child care centre can clearly define its purpose, the ages and numbers of children it serves and the particular philosophy of child development it follows. Regulations can also be developed to establish a minimum standard for quality. A nutrition program or a teen employment project can similarly be described.

However, defining the purpose and scope of a family resource program becomes much more complex and challenging under an ecological approach.

When practitioners move from offering a categorical service to defining their purpose in terms of “family support”, they must begin to address a much wider range of children’s and families’ needs. In adopting such an approach, they may be criticized for “wanting to include everything” and for taking on a task so broad that it will eventually prove unmanageable. Although, the proposed working definition is constructed to accommodate the range of possible program components and to be sensitive to the need for variability, it does not address the issue of where boundaries should be drawn.

One solution to the problem of scope would be to develop a prescriptive definition setting out specific principles, program categories and program components. It would then be much simpler to establish policy guidelines for funding and accountability. Evaluative research would also be much easier. Moreover, this approach would have the virtue of making quite clear what the boundaries should be.

In point of fact, however, no such prescriptive definition could adequately reflect the diversity discovered in the current study, especially given the more than one hundred different program components that were identified, the range of sponsoring groups, the multi-disciplinary staffing, and the varying community contexts. Any attempt to impose a limited definition on the field could seriously undermine the potential relevance and responsiveness of the resulting family resource programs. In any case, it is doubtful that practitioners would agree about what components should and should not be included.

Many program representatives had given serious attention to the question of scope, consciously resolving it in ways that were meaningful for their own circumstances. In most instances, the scope of a particular family resource program evolved over time, influenced by factors such as changing community needs, and funding opportunities. A number of the programs studied started fairly small, gradually adding on program components as they gained more experience. Some of the family resource programs in the study sample also broadened their scope by amalgamating or partnering with other local organizations. For example, Andrews Street Family Centre grew out of community discussions sponsored by inner city schools and a number of local resource groups. Over a period of two years, a number of existing community programs came together into one facility to develop a continuum of family supports in north end Winnipeg.

The program profiles section of this report contains many examples of family resource programs broadening their scope by collaborating and coordinating various aspects of their program components with other community services and programs. Particularly in urban communities with more established human services, better linkages with existing service providers allowed family resource programs to take advantage of others’ expertise, rather than offering new programs and services directly. Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre, for example, rented space in its building to Kawartha Child Care Services instead of setting up its own family day care program. Together, they offered joint training and support to family day care providers. The Centre also ran a special child care providers’ drop-in and supplied theme kits through its toy library. Chilliwack Community Services sponsored a study entitled *Barriers to Women’s Employment in the District of Chilliwack*. The study recommendations resulted in a new project that was carried out by another local organization offering employment support programs.

Most of the family resource programs in the study actively participated in planning in their local communities and surrounding areas and advocated on behalf of families. These activities often led to new partnerships and other joint endeavours. Occasionally, some of the programs and program components take on a life of their own, and may become new organizations in their own right. The Community Action Committee for Bay St. George was initiated jointly by of the Port au Port Community Education Initiative and the Coalition to End Violence. It is now gradually emerging as a separate network of family resource programs, while maintaining close links with its parent and sponsoring organizations. The North End Parent Resource Centre in Halifax grew out of the joint efforts of the North End Mothers' group and of staff from the North End Community Health Clinic, who helped secure initial project funding.

The family resource programs with the broadest range of program components tended to be those that were nested in well-established, multi-service community-based agencies such as Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Chilliwack Community Services, Penticton & District Community Resources Society and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society. These agencies had been in operation for a number of years, but had introduced a Family Place and related family and children's programs as part of an overall effort to make their services more holistic, responsive and accessible to families.

Program scope is also very directly influenced by the availability of volunteers and their role in the family resource program. All of the family resource programs in the study sample relied heavily on the work of volunteers. For example, Communities for Children and Families is a network of Family Places active throughout the District of Chilliwack and largely staffed and run by volunteers.

### Practice Example

#### *New playground dream comes true in Yarrow*

*It was a labour of love for the kids. Dozens of Yarrow residents spent most of a recent Saturday building a new community playground, an idea that last year was only a dream, but became reality with the help of a corporate sponsor and many caring volunteers. "We were two mothers with two kids with no place to play," said Yarrow mom, L.J., who went to the District of Chilliwack last year with her friend T.M. to ask for a new playground. L.J. and T.M. were disappointed to hear there was no money for a Yarrow playground until 1997, but were not dissuaded from their mission.*

*L.J. successfully convinced her employer at the Yarrow Branch of First Heritage Savings Credit Union ... to fund \$10,000 in play equipment ... It took dozens of meetings, bake sales and car washes to raise the other \$15,000 needed for the playground. "I had no idea building a playground was so expensive" said L.J., who said the community saved \$5000 in construction costs by doing the labour themselves. Construction on the Kids FIRST Playground was delayed for months because of wet weather, but it was sunny skies and all systems go when the volunteers poured in to lend a hand ... The District of Chilliwack provided the land, site preparation and ground cover at the new playground.*

*L. J. says it's a sign of the times that groups looking for district funds are finding "there's just no money left." But with the help of the community, the moms at **Yarrow Family Place** were able to make their playground dream a reality ... (by Pauline Martin, newspaper article from the Chilliwack Progress Weekender, July 12, 1996, p. A10 )*

Each community raises its own funds to cover program costs; volunteer coordinators and community volunteers are trained and supported by an Outreach Coordinator on the staff of Chilliwack Community Services, the sponsoring agency. (See the practice example above for a typical example of volunteer impact.) The family resource programs that made up the Bay St. George Community Action Committee also relied heavily on volunteers to manage many aspects of their operation and to help raise funds. This often happens in many family resource programs.

## Implications for Practice

The broad scope of many of the family resource programs studied allows them to offer more holistic, responsive and integrated services. While this is part of their strength, certain pitfalls may result. Program representatives talked about how easy it was to take on more than could be practically managed. If the issue of over-extension goes unaddressed, it can lead to problems of staff and volunteer burn-out, of spreading services “too thin” and thereby reducing their quality. To avoid these problems, program representatives stressed the importance of setting clear program objectives, followed by regular internal evaluations to ensure that the various program components are operating as they should, and with adequate resources.

Policy makers and funders also need to realize that bringing together a wide range of program components requires a serious ongoing time commitment on the part of staff. Whether the linking occurs internally or through partnerships with other community services, the complex nature of the operation must be recognized in any funding and program guidelines that are developed.

When a wide range of program components is offered, there are also implications for staffing and training. Most of the programs studied had staff members trained in a number of disciplines, the most common being social work (including training in counselling, group work and community development), early childhood education and adult education; public health nursing and administration were less common backgrounds. While more generic training programs, drawing on multi-disciplinary approaches would be valuable, the need for multi-disciplinary staff teams will continue.

# CHAPTER 5

## The Role of Child Care in Family Resource Programs

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### I. Child Care from a Family Support Perspective

*An important historical shift is occurring in child care. Increasingly, a concept termed family-centred child care is achieving prominence. The traditional focus on the child as the client in child care is being redirected to the parent-child relationship. Likewise, the concept of parent involvement in child care is being changed to family support ... The child care center becomes a community center in which parents and teachers learn from one another and in which parents' adult needs are met through programs at the center as well as through linkages to community services (Galinsky and Weissbourd, 1992, p. 47).*

Given the ecological orientation of family resource programs and their general aim to support families in their child-rearing efforts, it would seem logical for family resource programs to provide a range of child care components and to link with other child care services. Child care services can be an excellent source of family support through offering alternative arrangements for care while parents are working or studying, or help when there are problems such as illness and family emergencies. Child care services also offer opportunities to promote children's development, as well as provide information and education for parents.

While there are potentially important benefits to be gained from linking child care and family resource programs, introducing a family support approach requires some rethinking of the way child care programs are conceptualized and delivered. Larner (1995), for example, notes in *Linking Family Support and Early Childhood Programs* that: "Early childhood programs and family support programs differ significantly in the ways they define their missions, approach families, view professionals and finance their efforts" (p. 3). Prior to discussing the child care program components that were part of the family resource programs studied, it is important to review some of these differences and to consider their implications for practice.

As noted earlier, a family support perspective views families as part of a larger ecological system, seeing "the child in the context of the family and the family in the larger context of community life, social institutions and government policies" (Weissbourd, 1987, p. 48). Traditional approaches to child care, however, have tended to concentrate on promoting children's development. In the process, they have not always taken into account children's interconnections with their families and neighbours or considered the possibility of connecting child care programs with other children's services and with the local community (Larner, 1995; Powell, 1987; Saraceno, 1984; Singer, 1992). Galinsky and Weissbourd (1992) have commented on this problem:

*Despite widespread advances in a theoretical understanding of child-parent-community relationships in the early childhood field, programs exemplifying these practices remain at the edge of the child care system. The prevailing mode of child care still conceives the child as separate from the family and sees the teacher as focusing on the child ... (p.51).*

Powell (1987) has also noted that day care has not evolved as a family support program because the primary focus has been on the child: "Day care should be more than a high-quality child-development program that frees parents to pursue work. It should be a support, not a supplement, to the family" (p. 116-17).

Adopting a family support perspective on child care changes the focus from a narrow concentration on children's needs to a focus on the more complex interplay between children's and parents' needs, community customs and values, and existing resources. While maintaining concern for the quality of care children receive, a family support perspective recognizes the role that parents and other caregivers play in ensuring high quality, and the needs of these adults to receive education and support with childrearing, whether they are at home or at outside work. It also takes into account the extent to which publicly organized child care services are available to respond to the needs of children and families. When family support and child care programs are linked, parents have ready access to a variety of resources they may require, such as information and referral services, employment support programs or help in finding housing. Larner (1995) has written about "two-generation" programs combining services for parents and children that aim to help parents become self-sufficient while their children are preparing for success in school. In addition to providing child care:

*... these new programs break from the past in the way they conceptualize services for parents. Their primary focus is not on parent education as much as on services to lift the family from poverty—skill-building, treatment for mental health problems and assistance moving into the labour force (p. 17).*

U.S. research has also identified the important preventive potential of these multi-dimensional programs that combine child development and parent support (see for instance, Schorr and Schorr, 1988; Seitz and Provence, 1990). In the United Kingdom, Moss and Penn (1996) have argued for a new discourse on early childhood services "as institutions of cultural, social and economic significance—community resources that should be multi-functional to meet a variety of needs including care, education, socialization, health and family support." They should be available to all children and families. The new discourse not only recognizes the important role early childhood services play in meeting employment and social welfare goals, but "extends beyond them to meet multiple purposes for a variety of families, serving collective as well as individual ends" (Lero, 1998).

To date, there has been little documentation of Canadian child care programs that have adopted a family support approach, although there are a number of anecdotal accounts of efforts that are underway. Lee-Blickstead (1996) has written about the process of adopting a family support approach in a family day care setting, and research sponsored by the Canadian Child Care Federation is exploring community-oriented conceptions of quality child care (Benner, 1997).

In practice, adopting a family support perspective results in a broader definition of need—one that recognizes that families' needs for child care support extend beyond finding a licensed child care space or an informal

arrangement. This broader definition takes into account the fact that families' needs vary over time, according to a child's age, individual characteristics, the parents' circumstances, and whether or not other family and neighbourhood resources are available. In their study *Child Care Needs and Preferences*, Lero, Pence, Goelman, Brockman (1985) point out that traditional definitions of need have restricted the purposes of care so that only the requirements of a limited number of families are met. "An alternative view of non-parental child care is that it is a common type of family support used to some degree by most families for a variety of purposes" (p. 104). Lero and her colleagues noted that the families they surveyed identified a number of reasons why they needed child care:

- when parents are working or looking for work
- when parents attend an educational institution or training program
- to support families [and children] with special needs
- to stimulate children's development and promote their personal competence
- to be a supportive resource to families at specific times of peak need or when their usual child care arrangements are not available
- to enable parents to participate in volunteer or community activities, to attend to personal and family tasks, and/or as a means of allowing them time to socialize with other adults (based on Lero, Pence, Goelman and Brockman, p.104).

Both relatives and non-related caregivers require many of the same child care supports and information, as well as backup care when they are ill. To be supportive, child care must also be reasonably accessible (i.e., nearby *and* affordable) and flexible in order to respond to families' changing circumstances.

The need for more flexible child care arrangements has been well documented. For example, the Canadian National Child Care Study (1988) found that both parents worked a standard nine-to-five work week in only one-third of dual-earner families with children under age thirteen. In two-thirds of these families, one or both parents worked evenings, night shifts, weekends or irregular hours (Lero and Johnson, 1994, p. 13). More recent information from the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth indicates that this pattern has continued (Lero, 1997, p. 9). Because most licensed child care facilities are open weekdays from approximately 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, they are not able to respond to parents' needs for child care at other times. Some parents solve the problem of finding care outside of regular day care hours by scheduling their work in a complementary way that allows them to share their child care responsibilities; other parents may not have that flexibility because of work demands or because they are parenting alone.

## Limitations of a Categorical Approach to Defining Need

There is another, more fundamental problem. Much of the current thinking and advocacy about child care has been dominated by a concern for the needs of parents who are working or studying full-time. Government funding has often further limited subsidies to children and families in need (Kyle, 1992, 1997; Lero, 1998). While there is unquestionably a need to expand the provision of regulated child care services for working parents,<sup>1</sup> the

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1 The need for expanded child care services has been well documented at the federal level, for example, by: the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, 1984; the Task Force on Child Care, 1985; the Special Parliamentary Committee on Child Care, 1987; the Sub-Committee on Poverty, 1993; and the Liberal Redbook, 1993.

tendency to focus on this group has meant that the child care needs of parents who work part-time or who are at home caring for their own children have often been overlooked. The Ontario Rural Child Care Committee noted that part of this problem of overlooking parents at home or those using informal child care arrangements stems from the categorical way government has treated child care. Funding criteria are usually narrowly defined, and programs are targeted to specific categories of parents. As the committee notes, this often leads to a fragmented, disjointed way of providing services:

*Under present government policy, legislation and funding allocations, simply being “a parent” is not enough. What kind of parent you are will determine your access to child care supports. To receive child care supports you must give up your status as “community parent” to become more specifically a stay-at-home parent, working parent, teen parent, low income parent, a parent who farms, a JOBS Ontario parent, etc ... Once your parenting status is established, if it changes you must re-establish your new parent status and often move on to a new service or new organization (if it is available) ... Seasonal employment, part-time work schedules, six month plus maternity leaves, unstable employment positions all cause changes in parent status, often overnight ... At a time when parents are trying to deal with a change in employment status it is non-supportive to complicate the matter with a change in parent status as well (Ontario Rural Child Care Committee, March, 1995, p. 3).*

A family support approach differs in that it views child care as being potentially needed by *all* families and family types, and sees education and support with child-rearing as a common need—without children having to be labelled as a problem or parents seen as being inadequate in some way.

## The Fragmentation of Child Care Supports

This current way of conceptualizing child care into two categories, i.e., into formal (regulated) and informal (unregulated) child care sets up a false dichotomy which is too simplistic. It fails to take into account the ecological complexity of families' needs, and the potentially broad range of child care options required to address them. Sociologists and feminists (e.g., Glenn, 1994; Thiele, 1986) have criticized dichotomous thinking because, by definition, one aspect of the dichotomy is seen to be more valued and respected than the other. Dichotomous thinking is also limiting because by setting up two opposing categories, it simplifies and reduces the complexity of much of real-life experience.

In child care, the formal/informal dichotomy is problematic because it tends to call into question the quality of care in the majority of child care arrangements. In arguing the need for high-quality, regulated public care, there has been a tendency to characterize the great variety of child care arrangements that parents make informally as being inferior, and the caregivers who provide them as being inadequate. In Ontario, for example, a *Toronto Star* article on child care reported that “... advocates said children are far safer in regulated care than in the care of neighbours or relatives, and families must endanger their children to escape welfare ...” (Sept. 19, 1995, p. A2.) For a number of reasons, this position is troublesome.

First, informal care arrangements currently constitute the majority of child care arrangements of Canadian children. Using 1994–95 data from the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth, Lero (1997) found that the primary non-parental child care arrangements used for Canadian children 0–5 years (while their parents worked or studied) were distributed between unregulated family day care at 33%, publicly regulated child care at 29%, care by relatives at 22%, and other arrangements (such as care by nannies) at 16%. It is far too simplistic to assume that in over 70% of arrangements, the care children currently receive is inadequate. If true, it would indicate a child welfare problem of considerable magnitude. What is more likely to be the case is that the quality of care provided by unregulated family day care providers, relatives and other caregivers is variable, with some arrangements being excellent, some adequate, and still others inadequate and unacceptable. While Canadian studies are limited, U.S. research supports the idea that the quality of care in informal arrangements is quite variable (e.g., Nelson, 1991; Leavitt, 1991).

Primary Child Care Arrangements Used for Canadian Children 0-5 years, 1994-95	% (N=931,340)
Unregulated family day care	33%
<i>Public regulated child care</i>	29%
Child care centre	20%
Regulated family day care	9%
<i>Care by relatives</i>	22%
In the child's home	8%
In the relative's home	14%
Care in child's home by an unrelated caregiver	14%
Other arrangements	2%

Source: Lero, 1997

In Canada, licensing approaches also vary considerably. For example, in Newfoundland, there are no licensing requirements for home child care providers. In Ontario and Nova Scotia, only providers affiliated with a licensed agency are subject to the full range of provincial standards. In these latter provinces, the majority of providers who work independently are not required to meet any standards beyond the provincial limit on the number of children they can care for. While Pepper and Stuart (1991) found that in southern Ontario “supervised caregivers provided better quality family day care, on average, than did informal providers”, they also found that informal providers “were equally successful in establishing in their homes the warm, family-like atmosphere which is a major attraction of family day care”, with providers and children treating each other with “affection, cheerfulness, and respect” (p. 109). Rather than condemning all informal arrangements out of hand, it is necessary to become more aware of how and why they vary, and what factors operate to influence the quality of care provided.

Second, the bias against *all* unregulated day care is problematic, not because poor care doesn't exist, but rather because lumping everyone together makes it difficult to distinguish just who is offering substandard care—if by definition almost everyone is included. It treats caregivers as though they all belonged in a single category and fails to recognize their diversity in relation to formal training, length of child care experience, prior supervision by public agencies, previous employment and the extent to which they take part in various community support programs or provider networks. While sample sizes were small, both Kyle (1997) and Tuominen (1995) report considerable diversity in the characteristics of the home child care providers they studied. Caregivers often move back and forth between formal and informal settings. Some independent caregivers may seek formal training as they become more experienced, some professionally-trained caregivers may decide to stay home and care for children (Kyle, 1997). Instead of conflating all “informal” caregivers into one category, considerably more work needs to be done to understand who they are and what factors may or may not contribute to the quality of care they offer.

Third, the formal/informal child care dichotomy sometimes leads to a polarization between professionals on the one hand and parents and other caregivers on the other. This happens because of the implicit value placed on professionally trained caregivers at the expense of diminishing mothercare, relative care and care by family day care providers, who are usually parents themselves. In writing about child care and the empowerment process, the Cornell Empowerment Group (1989) noted: “child care programs are not automatically empowering for families, other caregivers, and the larger community ...” Among the factors that are problematic is the “pervasiveness of the ‘deficit’ perspective—the view that it is the professional’s job to determine what is wrong with families and communities, and to prescribe short-term solutions for these perceived deficiencies ... Professionals may see their role as protecting children from their parents, rather than finding ways to support parents’ efforts ...” (cited in Cochran, 1995, p. 9).

This stance of the professional as expert, and the concomitant devaluing of mothercare is incompatible with family support principles that view parenting as a developmental experience and promote programs which recognize and build on parents’ and other caregivers’ capacity for growth and development (Dunst, 1995; Weissbourd, 1987). Dunst and Trivette (1996) in writing about empowerment and effective helping practices cite a definition of family-centred care proposed by Brewer, McPherson, Magrab and Hutchins for health settings, which describes this approach. In the following quotation *child care* could readily be substituted for *health care*:

*Family-centred care is a philosophy of care in which the pivotal role of the family is recognized and respected ... In this philosophy families should be supported in their natural caregiving and decision-making roles by building on their unique strengths as people and families. In this philosophy, (normative) patterns of living at home and in the community are promoted; parents and professionals are seen as equals in a partnership committed to the development of optimal quality in the delivery of all levels of health care (p. 336).*

This shift in emphasis from a deficit approach to one that recognizes parental strengths and supports family functioning is at the heart of the paradigm shift that characterizes a family support perspective.

In all fairness, it must be acknowledged that the efforts of early childhood educators to be recognized as professionals arise in part because many people take the view that almost *anyone* can work with young children—no particular knowledge or expertise is required. Their struggle for professional recognition has been directed to breaking out of this social devaluation of carework and to have their knowledge, skills and work respected and more adequately remunerated. The problem is that the arguments they use have sometimes been cast in an oppositional stance that tends to devalue the skills and commitment that parents and other caregivers also bring to their carework. For example, family day care providers interviewed as part of the National Family Day Care Training Project (1998):

*... expressed particular frustration with the attitudes they sometimes face within the child care community ... The friction that sometimes occurs within the family day care community itself, between trained and untrained, or regulated and unregulated caregivers; the patronizing attitudes of some trainers and program staff; and the perceived lack of support from other child care sectors were all issues that caregivers spoke about with feeling (p. 12).*

These tendencies—to polarize caregivers working in formal or informal care into two groups and to discredit parents' decisions to use informal arrangements—have often resulted in conflicts between the groups, when in fact, all these caregivers share an interest in the well-being of children and families and would be wiser to join together to challenge neo-conservative socio-economic policies that exploit and devalue carework (Kyle, 1996; Glazer, 1993).

What is needed is a rethinking of traditional notions of professionalism. This would mean that the knowledge and expertise that early childhood educators clearly bring to their work would be valued and recognized. Providing quality developmental experiences for groups of young children is not something “anyone can do”; it requires training, thoughtful preparation and practiced skills, carried out in appropriately designed settings. At the same time, the present tendency to view parents and other caregivers as inadequate would be reframed and replaced by a perspective that focuses on these caregivers' strengths and their shared commitment to caring for children, and by a perspective that supports parenting and carework in a variety of contexts and settings.

Fourth, and lastly, thinking of child care solely in terms of formal or informal care glosses over the *number, complexity and importance* of child care support services offered in many communities. In addition to regulated centre and home-based child care these services may include babysitting co-ops, caregiver registries, information and referral services, training and networking opportunities for home child care providers, drop-ins, toy and equipment libraries, *halte-garderies*, parent relief services and emergency care. Many of these services were developed or facilitated by programs serving the “informal” sector as they began to recognize the complexity of family needs. They will be described in greater detail below.

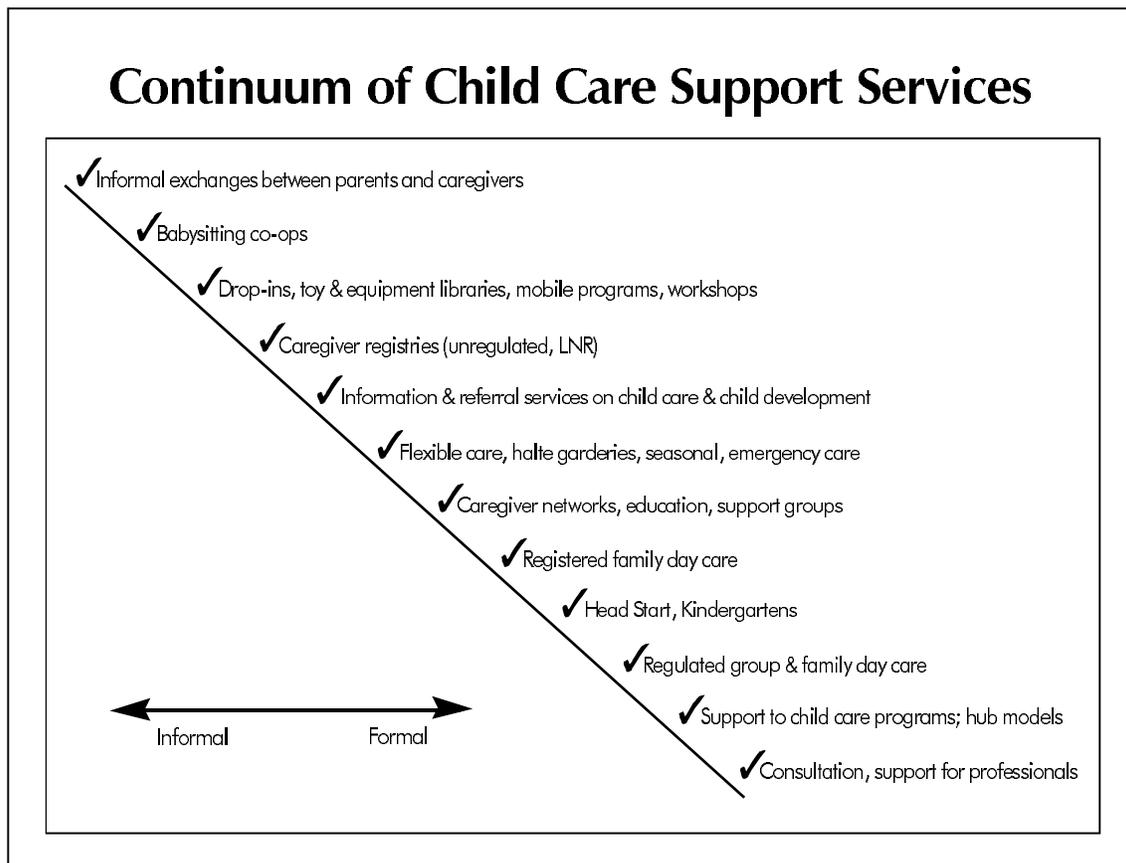
In summary, then, a family support perspective leads to a more comprehensive, flexible definition of child care services by:

- breaking down the traditional dichotomy between formal and informal child care, through recognizing parents'/families' need for a range and combination of child care supports, not just when they are at work or studying.
- recognizing that the quality of care offered to *all* children is vital, not just to children who use regulated services. It then follows that there is a need to offer support and resources to all who care for children: to parents at home, to family day care providers, relatives and other caregivers, including those who are professionally trained. Continuing to raise community consciousness about acceptable standards of child care through regulation, registration, parent education and caregiver training and support remains essential.
- overcoming the dichotomous, fragmented and sometimes oppositional treatment of “parents” and other “caregivers”. Many family day care providers are themselves parents; over time, some mothers may become providers.
- modifying the traditional “professional-as-expert” role, to the “professional-as-facilitator/educator” who recognizes and builds on parents' and other caregivers' strengths, interests and commitment to the children they care for. The professional focus is broadened from a child development perspective to one that incorporates a focus on adult development and adults' needs as careworkers.

## II. Reconciling the Dichotomies: Towards a Continuum of Child Care Support Services

Rather than continuing to think about child care needs as a formal/informal dichotomy, it seems more useful to think of a continuum of child care support services that covers a spectrum from informal caregiving exchanges that may take place between parents and neighbourhood caregivers, to regulated group and family day care services, as well as the provision of information and resources to support early childhood educators and other professionals.

Instead of dividing caregivers into two polarized and competing groups, a continuum allows consideration of what mix of child care support services best meets a given community's needs. Quality remains a key concern throughout, although the focus is broadened ecologically to include not only the needs of children, but also, the needs of all caregivers. The community context is also taken into account—What support services exist? How adequate are they? To what extent do they work together? Because at any one point in time families may require and use several different kinds of child care support, a family support approach highlights the importance of bringing together and coordinating a range of programs so that they function in a complementary way that makes it easy for families to take advantage of them. A family support approach also sets up a number of direct and indirect linkages with other services families may need, such as family counselling, employment support and subsidized housing.



### III. Child Care Support Services in the Case Studies

Because a goal of this research was to learn more about the child care support services offered by family resource programs, the programs included in the study sample should not necessarily be considered as typical of all programs. Nonetheless, the extensive range of child care and child development program components offered by the programs studied begins to suggest what it means to implement a continuum of child care support services within a community. Family resource programs in the study sample offered varying combinations of:

- nursery school and half-day child development programs such as Head Start, kindergarten preparation and parent co-operatives
- child care centres, serving infants, toddlers and preschoolers, as well as school-aged children; also, special school-based programs for teen parents
- regulated family day care; registration of license-not-required family day care providers<sup>2</sup>
- support and training for family day care providers (licensed, registered, supervised or independent)
- child care hub, connecting child care centres (and sometimes family day care homes) through shared administration, resources and staff support
- outreach and home-visiting support provided by a family worker to families taking part in a child care program
- short-term or occasional child care, offered in a variety of ways, through *halte-garderies*, children's school-break programs and summer camps, various parent relief and respite services, and emergency child care
- integration of children with special needs into all child care programs; professional support and training to centres and providers to promote integration
- child care information and referral for parents and other caregivers; facilitating access to child care subsidies; providing information about other community programs and resources
- seasonal rural child care programs (which include a number of the above program elements) designed to meet the periodic needs of parents working on farms or in orchards
- child-minding to support other programs in a family resource program.

While none of the family resource programs with child care components in the study sample included the full spectrum of child care support services listed above, most did include a mix of different program components, which they coordinated so that families could piece together fairly seamlessly the particular kinds of support they required. As well, since most of the child care support services included in the study sample were also part of larger family and community resource programs, families had ready access to an even more extensive range of family and children's programs.

The kinds of child care components included in family resource programs varied considerably across the programs studied. Based on the researchers' conversations with a number of practitioners, this uneven inclusion of child care components holds true for other family resource programs across the country, and appears to reflect differences in the extent to which supportive federal and provincial child care policies and funding initiatives have been put in place. In Ontario, pilot projects and funding for "child care support centres" were introduced beginning in 1981 (Kyle, 1992). In British Columbia, where the provincial government signed a four-year agreement under the

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<sup>2</sup> In British Columbia, child care legislation requires that only family day care providers who care for more than two unrelated children be licensed.

federal Strategic Child Care Initiatives Program in 1996 to pilot test a range of innovative projects, child care services and family resource programs have become more closely integrated in a variety of ways. A small number of other collaborative programs were also developed with funding from the now defunct federal Child Care Initiatives Fund. In other provinces, where funding and opportunities for innovation in child care or family support programs have been more limited, child care programs appear to be more isolated, operating separately as a more traditional categorical service stream with fewer formal linkages to other children's services.

As a result, when locating potential programs for the present study, it was fairly easy to identify a number of family resource programs in Ontario and British Columbia that offered a variety of child care services. In most other provinces, they were much more difficult to find. To the researchers' knowledge, in most provinces where child care and family support programs exist, they operate fairly independently. Often the family programs focus on supporting mothers and other caregivers caring for children at home, while the child care programs focus on child development and supporting parents who are working or studying. In some instances this categorical approach (which reflects the classic formal/informal dichotomy discussed earlier) has created conflict and tensions, particularly when the two types of programs come into competition for scarce funding. For example, program representatives working in the *Maisons de la famille* in Quebec noted ironically that the 1996 family policy announcements by the provincial government provided extensive funding to expand the number of child care and kindergarten spaces, but ignored the funding needs of programs supporting mothers caring for children at home (Government of Quebec, 1997).

### Distinctive Aspects of Child Care in the Case Studies

In addition to offering a wider range of child care options than are generally available, child care programs in the study sample that were nested in family resource programs had a number of aspects of service delivery that were relatively distinctive, including:

- *Greater flexibility in relation to the hours when services are provided* - In recognition that the amount of time families need child care may vary, several programs made it possible for families to obtain full-time, part-time (part day/part week), occasional, emergency and relief care all in the same group centre setting. Sometimes family day care homes were included as part of the backup support network. Logistically this involved the setting aside of several part-time spaces that could be either used for emergency care or pre-booked by families according to their needs. In some instances, multi-age grouping was used to accommodate the greater variability in children's ages that often results from being more flexible. Developing more flexible services also meant staff had to work closely with local government officials to obtain exemptions when provincial licensing requirements did not permit flexibility, or to test out alternative funding arrangements such as subsidies for part-time care.
- *Conscious planning for parents' as well as children's needs* - Most child care programs in the sample recognized parents' needs for support beyond supplementary care and childrearing, especially in the case of teen parents or other high-risk families. Support was made available to parents through services such as home visits, individual or group counselling and referrals to other community resources, in addition to the more usual parent meetings, parent suppers and involvement of parents in other special activities. For a more detailed illustration of how family support can be offered in a child care setting, refer to the practice example below. It describes how a family support worker attached to the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society's child care program worked with one refugee family.

## Practice example: A holistic approach to offering family support

A refugee family (a mother, father, and a 2 ½-year-old child) arrived in Calgary from West Africa, after spending four years in a refugee camp. The young mother had been seriously ill in the camp, during which time she was unable to care for her child. In Africa, prior to being in the refugee camp, the parents had lived in a rural area and so were unfamiliar with the customs and expectations associated with living in a more modern urban environment. The following is a description of the variety of services offered to the family over a period of years and outlines some of their contacts with the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) as the agency helped the family adjust to their new life circumstances and settle in Canada. The family support worker attached to the Cross Cultural Children's Centre and the Family Place played a central role in helping the mother overcome a number of difficulties and helped to ensure that the children born after the family arrived got off to a healthy start. In this example, CCIS staff worked at the individual, family and community levels, offering a variety of material, educational and emotional supports. Not only was there constant co-operation among CCIS staff working in different service areas, there was also continuing collaboration with other community agencies.

On arrival in Calgary the family was housed at the agency's Margaret Chisholm Resettlement Centre, where they took part in a two-week orientation session. During this time their language skills were assessed, and more permanent accommodation was arranged in public housing. Both parents were referred to ESL classes. The father, who had the equivalent of a community college education in Africa, attended ESL classes offered at CCIS and went on to complete upgrading courses that allowed him to study at university. Eventually he was able to qualify as an accountant. During his studies, CCIS helped him to find a part-time job, as well as to obtain a student loan to help finance his studies.

The mother, who had no formal education prior to coming to Canada, had difficulty with the ESL classes, and so was referred to more informal pre-literacy classes at CCIS. While she was attending classes, her child was cared for in the Cross Cultural Children's Centre on a part-time basis. Because of her illness and the trauma associated with life in the refugee camp, the mother experienced more problems adjusting to her life in Canada. She was feeling lonely, depressed and isolated because she couldn't speak English. The family support worker made a home visit to assess the

family needs and identified a number of areas where the family could benefit from support. She offered orientation to living in an apartment in Canada, basic help with budgeting, nutrition, health, child discipline and safety. She also helped the mother to obtain clothing that was more appropriate to Calgary winters. The mother was encouraged to volunteer in the Cross Cultural Children's Centre—not only because it helped to reduce her isolation and to improve her language skills, but also because it gave her a chance to feel that she could give back to the agency. The family support worker also helped the mother to get connected with a collective kitchen in her neighbourhood, and with a nearby church, where she could take part in the singing.

After her second child was born, the mother experienced a serious bout of post-partum depression requiring her to be hospitalized for a time. The family support worker, together with the public health nurse, helped the family arrange for a friend to come and stay with them until the mother was well enough to manage. During this time the first child began to attend the child care centre on a full-time basis. Once the mother was feeling better, the family support worker helped her to link up with a family resource centre in her neighbourhood, and to attend a children's drop-in storytime offered by her local library (furthering both her own and her children's literacy skills). By the time a third and fourth child arrived, the mother had successfully overcome a number of her initial adjustment problems and started work on a part-time basis as a child care provider. Her years as a volunteer at the Cross Cultural Children's Centre had given her the confidence to try this work.

All of the family's children eventually attended the Centre, which has done pioneering work in developing programs for preschool children learning a second language. When the oldest child was ready to attend kindergarten, the family support worker met with the local school (where there were also other children from refugee families) to share information about the children's cultural background and to offer the school support in working with immigrant families. At an even broader community level, CCIS has provided space for newcomers from West Africa to meet as a group. They formed an association which met regularly and sponsored a number of social activities. This helped to reduce the isolation of newcomers and provided opportunities for them to build their own support networks and to help one another.

- *Support to parents to assist them to learn about child development and to improve parenting skills* - Many of the child care programs in the sample created opportunities for parents to learn more about child development and parenting. In some cases, parents took part in informal discussions and workshops with staff, other parents and community resource persons. In other cases, parents worked alongside staff, receiving encouragement as they practiced new skills. For example, the Moncton Early Family Intervention Program requires parents to participate in their child's Headstart program (based on the High/Scope curriculum) two days a month to encourage their understanding of and involvement in their child's education. During these classroom sessions, staff model behaviour management and offer each parent specific suggestions about observing and interacting with their child. An observation window allows parents to watch their children first, until they feel comfortable enough to take part in the activities. Parents also attend weekly two-hour parenting sessions for the two years their children are enrolled in the Headstart program. These sessions focus child development and meeting children's basic needs, including their needs for food, shelter, clothing, health and hygiene, safety and security. Occasional home visits and individual family meetings held at the Centre provide additional opportunities to discuss families' concerns. Where necessary, families are connected to other aspects of the program such as subsidized housing and literacy training. Family outings and other special events are organized to give parents an opportunity to enjoy recreational experiences with their children that they may not have experienced in their own growing up. These events also promote a sense of camaraderie and community with other families.
- *Program staff have work responsibilities in several parts of the program* - In some programs staff worked part of the time in a child care centre, and at the same time supervised some regulated family day care providers and developed resources and other support for both regulated and independent providers. For example, in South East Grey Community Outreach (SEGCO), staff work as a team sharing responsibility for delivering all the child care program options offered at a particular hub location; in the more usual arrangement, an individual staff member would be assigned to work in only one part of the program. Sharing responsibilities is perhaps more challenging because it requires the juggling of different administrative and program aspects. However, it can also result in a natural coordination as staff develop a more holistic overview of how program resources might best be combined to meet a particular family's needs. This kind of teamwork can also cut down on a sense of territoriality or rivalry among staff working in different program areas, as staff develop loyalties to the whole program, rather than to one specific aspect of it.
- *Sharing of resources and expertise between licensed and other child care programs* - In a number of the programs in the study sample, there were examples of different child care program components sharing various resources such as space, equipment and staff expertise. For example, in the Dundurn Military Family Resource Centre, gym space, toys and equipment were shared by children taking part in the licensed child care program and those in the co-operative play group. The Penticton & District Community Resources Society packed up the equipment used for the school-based teen child care centre in Penticton and moved it to Ossoyos during the summer break for use in a child care program set up specially to meet the seasonal needs of parents working in nearby orchards. In the Osprey Community Centre, part of the SEGCO hub, the licensed child care centre for infants to school-aged children also shared space and equipment with a co-op nursery school program and community play groups. Many of the program representatives commented on the value of being able to draw on the skills and expertise of staff who were working in different facets of child care support programs. Their work experience and skills not only complemented one another, but also provided support at the staff level when working with difficult situations. When child care programs are part of a larger network or hub it also makes it possible to hire more specialized staff (such as a resource teacher) whose expertise and salary costs can be shared among a number of programs.

- *Family day care providers are not highly segregated according to regulatory status* - Many of the child care support program components such as drop-ins, play groups, toy and equipment libraries, and educational workshops are made available to all caregivers, regardless of regulatory status—whether regulated, registered or independent. This inclusive approach makes it possible for providers with less experience or training to gain access to a variety of information and resources. It also helps providers to connect in an informal setting with those who are more experienced, thereby reducing their isolation.

### **Support to license-not-required family day care providers**

Chilliwack Community Services has carried out pioneering work in extending the child care continuum. It has tested new approaches to enhancing the quality of care offered by unregulated family day care providers through its Child Care Resource and Referral Service and related Child Care Registration Project, which began in 1996. This three-year pilot project, funded under the Strategic Child Care Initiatives Program, was designed to test new ways to improve the accessibility, quality and accountability of license-not-required (LNR) family day care homes. The goals of the project are:

- to develop a voluntary process of registration for LNR family day care homes that promotes quality, inclusive child care
- to evaluate the quality of LNR care and determine the impact of registration standards on quality and accountability
- to establish a mechanism to locally administer the provincial infant/toddler grant
- to communicate the results to participants, other child care support programs and the provincial government.

As part of the project, a registration manual has been developed in consultation with other B.C. Child Care Resource and Referral Programs. It sets out the minimum standards an LNR home child care provider must meet in order to be registered; additional voluntary standards a caregiver may wish to meet or parents may require; and a description of the policies and procedures to be observed by the organization responsible for registering providers. LNR providers who become registered are approved after a screening process and reference check; they are also required to participate in assessments to determine their personal training needs. Providers are then offered referrals of families needing care, along with other supports such as group liability insurance, a toy and resource library, workshops, social activities, home visits and a newsletter.

### **Inclusion of children with special needs**

Most of the child care programs in the study sample had adopted policies and practices that routinely provided for the integration of children with a variety of special needs into their programs. As well, their close collaboration with larger multi-service agencies helped to ensure that the other services these children and families might require were fairly readily accessible. Training was also offered to caregivers. For example, as part of a larger provincial initiative to develop a service delivery model that supports the inclusion of all children in child care settings, Penticton & District Community Resources Society has developed a pilot project to train four family day care providers to work with children with special needs. The providers and the project coordinator are taking extension courses related to caring for children with special needs through the Northern Lights Community College. Rather than working on their assignments in isolation, the providers and coordinator meet together regularly in a study group to discuss their readings and prepare for their assignments.

## Child Care “Hub” Models: Implementing a Continuum of Child Care Support

Three of the family resource programs selected for study have developed and currently operate a child care “hub” model: South East Grey Community Outreach, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House and Penticton & District Community Resources Society.<sup>3</sup> The Ontario Coalition for Better Daycare was one of the first groups to describe a hub or “neighbourhood resource centre” model that aimed “to provide a comprehensive approach to child care which broadens and enriches the program possibilities and coordinates programs which are scattered, isolated or non-existent” (Dyad Projects, 1995, p. 4). It was envisioned as a network of services to support families’ child care needs, and, in addition to offering a variety of child care services, it included parent support services such as parent-child drop-in centres, and toy-lending and resource libraries. The 1991 B.C. Task Force on Child Care expanded on the Coalition model by adding elements such as networking opportunities for all providers, caregiver accreditation, information and referral services for parents and caregivers, advocacy for child care and families, and community coordination, planning and development of new child care and family support services (Dyad Projects, 1995, p.5).

While all three hub models in the study sample have brought together a variety of child care program components, they differ in the number and kinds of program components that are included, and the way they are administered. What they share, however, is a commitment to develop a more comprehensive, complementary range of child care and family support services in their communities.

SEGCO and the Ontario Rural Child Care Committee have identified some of the benefits resulting from this coordinated approach:

*From an administrative perspective the Hub Model uses human and financial resources more effectively and efficiently. From a service perspective, the Hub Model promotes a more integrated, holistic approach to community families while promoting a framework of coordination and sharing between specific community services within the organization. The Hub also facilitates the development of a more comprehensive rural child care system by inter-connecting services and families’ fluctuating needs. The importance of the Hub is clearly illustrated by the stay-at-home-parent who learns, while attending a local playgroup, that it’s possible for her to use a local licensed child care centre on a Drop-in basis, or the working parent who learns of the local playgroups as she prepares for her six-month maternity leave. When communities set up Hubs that truly represent all child care choices, instead of a preferred type of care, information is available in a non-categorical manner (Ontario Rural Child Care Committee, March 1995, p. 5-6).*

The SEGCO and Penticton hub models both operate a centrally administered network of child care support programs situated in satellite locations in a number of small communities. Both have tailored their programs to specifically respond to the unique needs of the families they serve. For example, the Penticton Rural Child Care Project which is part of the hub, was set up to address the complex child care needs of parents working in the orchards or in the tourism industry. As Bland (1997) explains:

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<sup>3</sup> For detailed descriptions of each hub model refer to the program profiles.

*Orchards are dangerous places for children to be left unattended—the Okanagan sun is very hot, pesticides are used, rattlesnakes inhabit the orchards, and heavy machinery is employed to harvest and move the fruit. Families require care for very long hours and due to the extremely hot climate, work days must begin early in the morning. Workers often camp in orchards and move frequently from one farm to the next, with no fixed address (p. 23).*

Child care is provided through a child care centre and by specially recruited and trained family day care providers who are paid a supplementary fee for working extended hours; the transient workers are able to use the address of the project’s storefront office in order to qualify for child care subsidy. The Penticton hub is further “nested” in the larger parent organization, Penticton & District Community Resources Society. Mechanisms are in place to coordinate the various child care program components and, through their inclusion in the larger agency, to link child care services with an extensive range of youth, family and employment support programs offered by the Society in a number of communities.

The SECGO hub differs from Penticton in that the range of family services it provides directly is more limited. To offset this, SECGO has developed a number of partnerships with community organizations such as the Grey County Board of Education, the Grey Bruce Children’s Services Planning and Coordination Committee, and the Grey Owen Sound Social and Family Services. These partnerships allow SECGO to work in a highly collaborative and complementary fashion to address other facets of family needs.

The Kiwassa hub differs yet again, in that Kiwassa Neighbourhood House created a network by bringing together a number of established child care programs in several northeast Vancouver neighbourhoods. In the process, Kiwassa, as the central coordinating agency, developed different kinds of partnerships or management relationships with each of its hub member programs. For example, Kiwassa directly operates and administers the Kiwassa Variety Club Daycare Centre (which serves preschool children and is located on-site in the Neighbourhood House) and the Kiwassa Longhouse Out of School Care (offering school-aged care in a neighbourhood church next to an elementary school). Kiwassa co-operates with the parent board of Kiwassa-St. David’s Preschool Society nursery school (serving 3- to 4-year-old children) to provide program administration and financial management support. Kiwassa also assisted the parent board and the employees’ union of the Harbour View Daycare Centre to reopen their program which had previously closed due to financial instability. Together they developed a contractual agreement whereby Kiwassa takes responsibility for the day-to-day program management, while the parent board continues to direct the centre’s policies.

In addition to networking with other neighbourhood child care programs, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House is a member of the Vancouver Child Care Support Program, which is a consortium of child care agencies whose outreach programs to family day care providers are administered by Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre (a child care resource and information agency). These outreach programs offer caregiver training, home visits, equipment lending, networking opportunities and a registry for referrals to parents looking for child care. Since the Support Program is located within the neighbourhood hub, family day care providers can connect with the various child care and family resources available at the Neighbourhood House, and through Kiwassa, to the resources offered by Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre.

The coordination and networking among various child care programs characteristic of a hub model often lead to the development of community forums or child care planning committees. They also offer opportunities for

government officials, agency representatives and consumers to come together to discuss service delivery issues, to identify and plan for unmet needs, and to advocate for children and families. For example, as part of their work to develop a service delivery model that supports the inclusion of children with special needs into all child care settings, Penticton & District Community Resources Society carried out consultations in a number of communities to discuss local issues and concerns about child care. Following these discussions, reference groups were formed to help develop implementation plans tailored to local circumstances.

All of the hub models in the study sample included a child care manager or coordinator in their staffing, whose role was to facilitate connections within and between the various child care programs, as well to connect them with other local agencies. This coordinating function is critical to ensuring the successful operation of the hub. The following list of “coordination activities” carried out by the child care manager (developed by Kiwassa) suggests why the manager role is a separate function, not one that can just be added on to a child care supervisor’s job. The child care manager is responsible for:

- *collaborating with other family service providers in the agency and community to:*
  - maintain a prominent profile for child care in the neighbourhood
  - support families through information sharing and program planning across child care programs and other family support services
  - identify neighbourhood family needs
  - plan or develop new family support or child care programs
- *facilitating the continuum of child care programs to:*
  - develop a common philosophy statement and policies and procedures manual
  - share information and resources
  - understand the ways various child care options can work together to support families
  - participate in training and professional development activities with providers from across the continuum of child care options
  - plan program delivery in response to neighbourhood family needs
  - assist parents to access appropriate neighbourhood services as their child care needs change
- *working with individual child care program coordinators to:*
  - ensure quality standards of care and maintain licensing requirements
  - maintain culturally appropriate program delivery
  - maintain a full enrollment
  - manage the program budget
  - maintain the required materials for effective program delivery
  - integrate special needs children into the program
  - participate in program evaluation activities
  - implement established policies and procedures
  - establish positive relationships with parents (Dyad Projects, 1995, p. 19).

# CHAPTER 6

## Meeting Basic Needs: Employment, Food and Housing

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### I. Family Support, Employment Support and Community Economic Development

*The basic physical needs of all children in Canada—food, housing and care—must be met. Their parents must be able to find work and make a decent living for themselves and their children (National Goals for Healthy Child and Youth Development, Health Canada, 1995, p. 13).*

#### The Need for Employment Support and Community Economic Development

While neighbourhood or settlement houses and larger community service agencies have often included employment support and community economic development (CED) components in addition to the more usual family support services, interest in developing program components in these two areas has recently become much more widespread among all kinds of family resource programs. This new interest has come about as programs search for ways to address the impact of changing economic conditions and the resulting higher rates of unemployment and poverty on many of the families with whom they work. When basic needs go unsatisfied, family well-being and stability are threatened.

As Powell (1993) notes in his review of research on parent-child early intervention programs: “...needs in the family’s environment (e.g., no nearby extended family and friends; inadequate food and housing) create stresses that preempt parents from attending to the information and pedagogical demands of a parent education program” (p. 13).

Because family resource programs are often located in lower income, high-risk neighbourhoods, many of the families they serve have been affected not only by a lack of jobs and affordable child care, but also by cutbacks to social assistance and

*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control...Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance (International Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, United Nations, 1948).*

(un)employment insurance that exacerbate existing inequities (Evans, 1997; Novick, 1997). In some provinces, social assistance programs have increased expectations for single mothers to become employed, and have tied their eligibility for benefits to participation in workfare and retraining programs (often without adequate provision for child care) (Evans, 1997).

Kitchen (1997), for example, notes:

*Raising children requires money, energy and time; pre-requisites that are scarcities for the majority of families, and compounded for sole support parents who have to compensate for the loss of the other parent in all three areas. Unfettered market forces which throw people out of work or diminish their salaries make it difficult or impossible for many to provide for their children ... sole support mothers and their dependent children suffer more than men from measures undermining the welfare state. Their risk of living in poverty is five times greater than that of two parent families ... The economic vulnerability of mothers is a reflection of their disadvantaged position in a labour market that is increasingly segmented into high-skilled, well-paying and low-skilled, low-paying jobs. Women are overwhelming found in the low-paying jobs, and even when they work at higher-paying jobs, women receive only two-thirds the payments of men ... (p. 104-105).*

In a number of communities, family resource programs are reaching out to families who have fallen through the cracks in the increasingly tattered social safety net by developing employment support and CED programs to assist parents to prepare for and obtain work and to create local employment opportunities. In so doing, they not only strengthen families by helping them become financially independent, but the work they create often contributes to making their communities safer, more productive and caring places to live.

## **Employment Support and Community Economic Development in the Case Studies**

The kinds of employment support and CED program components offered by a number of the family resource programs in the study sample are listed below. The employment support program components have been broken into two groups— programs for adults and programs for youth—although in practice, older youth (over 18 years of age) may also take part in adult programs. Employment support and CED efforts are also closely linked. Program participants use their training and volunteer experience to build skills and confidence, before venturing into community projects or the mainstream job market.

### **Adult programs**

Employment support programs happen on both an informal and formal basis in family resource programs. Informally, staff and program participants constantly share information about what community resources are available, and assist individuals to develop their self-esteem and sense of personal competence. They also offer more concrete help with parents' job-seeking efforts. For example, family resource programs often make available resources such as telephones, newspapers, computers, photocopiers and fax machines to people seeking jobs. They may also provide participants with bus fare to attend an interview and appropriate clothing from the clothing exchange.

**Employment support program components**

## For adults

- Information and referral to employment counselling
- Language instruction, ESL courses for adults
- Adult educational upgrading and literacy
- Life skills, pre-employment counselling, job search (both short and longer-term programs)
- Compulsory short-term life skills, career counselling for welfare recipients
- Job-finding clubs
- Pre-employment skills training and courses for specific jobs
- Training and orientation for family day care providers
- Arranging for and/or providing adult work placements
- Workfare placements to supplement the work of resource centre staff
- Educational scholarships

## For youth

- Homework help, tutoring
- Computer clubs, other computer literacy training
- Career awareness, work orientation and education
- Immigrant youth employment outreach
- Youth employment counselling and practical job experience
- Community college and university student practicums

**Community economic development**

- Training and (occasional) hiring of community residents to work in programs
- Other job creation

Life skills development can happen both informally (through participation in drop-ins and other program activities) and more formally through participation in workshops and courses devoted to literacy, educational upgrading, job preparation and job search skills. The voluntary work that participants do to help in the set up and operation of different program areas often leads to more formal work experiences. For example, a participant who begins by helping with the preparation of food for a community lunch program may join a community catering collective, help organize and staff a community kitchen or find a job in a local restaurant. If during this process a participant finds that she has particular skills and interests in these areas, she may decide to return to community college to study nutrition and food preparation. Similarly, some participants who begin by helping with child care in the drop-in may become interested in offering child care themselves; some may go on to seek more formal training.

While usually portrayed as programs to foster quality in family day care, home child care provider training programs are also job creation and employment training programs. As well as providing information about child development and management, these orientation and training programs assist providers to better deal with the business aspects of their work and to help them become more financially stable. If providers offer better care as a result of their participation in these programs, parents are likely to be more satisfied and continue to employ the provider, whose child care earnings may be an important source of income for her family. Family resource programs that offer caregiver registries, or information and referral services to link parents and caregivers, are in effect, providing employment support services for providers.

Sometimes participants who have themselves found ways to overcome personal troubles are hired as outreach workers to do home visiting and offer other supports to more alienated or high-risk families who may feel threatened by more professional overtures. For example, *Re-Nou-Vie's Mères-Amies* program, Andrews Street

Family Centre's Moms Helping Moms program, and Chilliwack Community Services' Parent Project are all home visiting programs that employ former participants and/or community members. The programs provide backup support, training and other resources. Interestingly, recruiting program participants or other community members to become staff members is one of the guidelines for family support practice identified by the Family Resource Coalition (1996, p. 13-14).

Depending on their auspices and philosophy, family resource programs vary in the extent to which they hire program participants. For example, Andrews Street Family Centre (ASFC) worked consciously to identify and subsequently hire local residents to work in various aspects of its program. The Centre also provided training opportunities to better prepare them to do their work. The following excerpt outlining the Andrews Street approach is taken from a 1996 report:

*... the Centre's approach to program development is based on the premise that within our community there are many skills and strengths...during the [needs assessment] survey a skills inventory of individuals in the community was compiled and 420 persons offered to volunteer ... While professional staff from outside the immediate area are presently operating part of the program, their positions are not viewed as permanent. The intention of the staff currently employed at ASFC is to build on the "people power" that already exists in the community, and work themselves out of jobs. Job descriptions specify that a community member will be mentored into these positions. As of this writing, the executive director has reduced her hours to part-time and a community member is acting as assistant executive director. The human resources coordinator has resigned and a volunteer coordinator has been hired from the community in a full-time position. The coordinator of the Moms Helping Moms program is a community resident who is employed full-time. There have also been a variety of part-time and term positions that have been filled by members of the community who have been gaining skills through the services provided by the centre. The overall objective is to increase the capacity in families and in the neighbourhood for self-help and to keep jobs in the community. ASFC will actively pursue training options for volunteers and family members, both youth and adults, who are regularly involved in Centre programs and who show promise and motivation. Plans include the design and delivery of training programs here, in partnership with other organizations and businesses and involving Red River Community College and Winnipeg Education Centre.*

What is particularly interesting about this Andrews Street example is the use of a number of different strategies for training community members, including learning through volunteering, mentoring by professionals, on the job training and participation in more formal training programs designed for the Centre and offered in partnership with community educators. In other family resource programs where there is less emphasis on a community development philosophy, program participants may be hired as paraprofessionals to work alongside and supplement the work of professionally trained staff. (See for example, the Parent Project, offered by Chilliwack Community Services.) These work opportunities often serve as stepping stones to further training or more stable employment by offering those involved an opportunity to gain new skills and experience, and in the process, to build their sense of self-esteem.

Nozick (1993) has written about how this important process works, and how the development of self-esteem can lead to increased participation in community programs. People's needs for self-worth and autonomy are met:

*... by providing opportunities for self-expression, self-development and personal empowerment through community support groups and programmes (e.g., literacy programmes, skills upgrading ...). Self-help groups are a source of strength both for the individual and the community. This is because in many ways social change works from the inside out, beginning with healing and empowering of the self, which in turn affects relationships at home, and eventually transforms relationships in the larger community and social institutions. Self-help, as a process, builds community because it is a "helping others" process at the same time; a good part of healing comes from sharing one's experiences and strengths with others. Very often people who have gained confidence and self-esteem through a group process or else a feeling of competency in a part of their life which they previously lacked (e.g., learning how to read) become dedicated volunteers and community workers helping others to overcome their personal barriers (p. 37).*

Although providing opportunities for program participants to volunteer and hiring them to carry out some of the staff jobs can be helpful for those involved, program representatives were clear that the number of people who can be directly employed in any program is limited. As a result, family resource programs interested in community economic development were constantly on the look-out for ways to create additional jobs for community members. Many of the jobs created not only offered employment to program participants; they often contributed useful services to the community. Some initiatives were organized as co-operatives. Examples of job creation or small business projects included: a catering co-op (Andrews Street and North End Parent Resource Centre); a house repairs and renovations co-op (Andrews Street); a women's sewing collective (East York/East Toronto), a cleaning co-op, making and selling handicrafts, bank teller training and a delivery (light trucking) business (North End Parent Resource Centre); recycling projects involving used clothing and other items (North End Parent Resource Centre and Moncton Early Family Intervention Program). These job creation projects tend to be fairly small scale. They also evolve over time; as participants gain experience they often decide to go on to further study or find better paying jobs in related businesses. Sometimes these projects spin off and are able to operate independently of the sponsoring organization.

A few of the larger, more established family resource programs in the study sample, such as Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society and Penticton & District Community Services, have developed a number of more formal program components. Examples include adult literacy and up-grading courses, computer instruction, pre-employment counselling and job-finding clubs to prepare people to (re)enter the labour force. Being located in a large multi-service agency, staff are able to work together to arrange for child care while parents take part in training, and to help with subsidies and more permanent child care arrangements if parents are able to find employment. Other family resource programs, such as Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre and East York/East Toronto Family Resources, while not offering these programs directly, have developed close links with local employment support programs and refer parents to them.

Many of the more formal employment support programs were funded by Human Resources Development Canada and by provincial government ministries concerned with employment. Although program representatives felt

employment support programs were important, some expressed concern about the way funders often required programs to operate, following a set course and a specific time frame, rather than allowing the courses to be tailored to the needs of a particular group of participants. There was also a concern that taking part in a short-term course was often too superficial, setting up false expectations that completion of the course would lead to a job. When this didn't happen because of the lack of jobs in some areas (especially for low-level, relatively unskilled workers), participants often ended up feeling even more desperate and demoralized.

The following example, taken from one of the family resource programs studied, illustrates some of these concerns. In early 1997, Chilliwack Community Services commissioned a study of barriers to women's employment because of concerns about opportunities in the District of Chilliwack (Hubberstey and Tate, 1997). Information was obtained through interviews with individual women (aged twenty to late fifties) with a range of employment histories. Key informants from employment service agencies were also interviewed, and focus groups were held. The unemployment rate for women in the area was 11%; it was double (22%) for aboriginal women and 14% for women with disabilities. While a number of employment training services were offered in the Chilliwack area, service gaps existed for women who were new to the workforce or who were not on any form of assistance (e.g., employment insurance or social assistance) because they were not eligible for federal or provincially-funded employment training programs. The following is a summary of the barriers to employment that were identified by those who were interviewed; they echo a number of concerns identified by program representatives in other parts of the country:

Structural barriers included:

- *a lack of job opportunities* - "The job market is shifting from higher paying more stable employment opportunities to more seasonal, lower paying, part-time service oriented positions"; these kinds of jobs do not allow single parent women to support their families (p. 12).
- *job entry requirements* - Employers are requiring more formal training and experience.
- *lack of affordable, appropriate child care* - Child care subsidies were not always available and did not fully cover costs of child care (p. 14).
- *program and government eligibility criteria* - Limits were placed on who could take part; a number of women seeking employment did not meet eligibility criteria. Wage subsidy programs (which paid the employer part of the costs of hiring a worker) were problematic because when the subsidy ended, employers frequently eliminated their jobs (p. 15).

Community barriers included:

- *traditional attitudes* - Women encountered stereotypes about what kinds of work they should do; women also faced barriers in relation to their age, with some being seen as too young or too old.
- *isolation and lack of support*
- *cultural differences and stereotyping* - These particularly affected aboriginal and immigrant women.
- *transportation problems*: Limited public transit made travelling to work and child care difficult for some women.

Personal circumstances that created barriers included:

- *costs of job search and employment* - There were expenses for clothes, transportation, resumes, etc.
- *lack of confidence and self-esteem.*

The Chilliwack report concluded with a recommendation that a women's resource centre be set up to offer such supports as: "a clothing exchange, resume writing, access to computers, drop-in day care, information about job opportunities; support groups and mentoring by other women; support for community economic development initiatives; information, referral and co-ordination regarding resources available to women ..." (p. 24). While a women's resource centre would perhaps have limited impact on some of the structural barriers identified in the study, it would serve to bring together a number of employment resources and supports for women in the community. The Centre would also be well placed to document and subsequently advocate on behalf of women's employment issues.

A few of the family resource programs in the study sample were involved in offering compulsory short-term life skills and career counselling sessions for welfare recipients and in providing workfare placements for people on social assistance. Others were being asked to do so. This presented an ethical dilemma for many program representatives because of the fundamental conflict between family support principles and the requirement for mandatory participation.<sup>1</sup> There was also concern that workfare placements take jobs away from other workers, replacing them with social assistance recipients who are less well trained and who are required to work at what amounts to less than minimum wage.

Some family resource programs in the study made a conscious decision not to take part in workfare programs and joined with other groups to lobby against them. Other family resource programs did participate, but attempted to implement the placements in ways which would blunt some of the more punitive aspects of workfare. Shrage and Deniger (1997) have written about this dilemma. They describe the contradictory impact of the introduction of workfare programs on community organizations in Quebec; their comments have relevance for community-based programs in many parts of Canada:

*The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right. (Article 6, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, United Nations, signed by Canada and the provinces in 1976.)*

*Traditionally underfunded and threatened by recent public service cutbacks, community organizations have turned to workfare training programs like EXTRA [Experience de travail] and CIT's [Corporations intermédiaires de travail] as a means of maintaining sufficient staff and funding for short term survival. But these organizations, especially the ones that work with*

<sup>1</sup> Readers will recall a key principle is that: "participation is voluntary. Family members who choose to take part in programs are more likely to experience control of their lives and to be more open to change. In the long run, coercion only perpetuates dependency."

*welfare recipients are in a very contradictory position. It can be argued that recipients who participate in workfare programs sponsored by community groups benefit by improving their material conditions and reducing their social isolation, and that the community organization benefits by continuing to survive. But this is a very limited vision, fraught with long term danger. Workfare programs are operating as a cheap alternative to properly funded community-based programs and services (p. 81).*

With the massive changes to social assistance programs all across the country and the introduction of workfare programs in many jurisdictions, the issue of the role that family resource programs play in relation to providing workfare placements will continue to grow. As the above example suggests, the issue is not a simple one to resolve and needs more open debate and discussion among family resource programs in order to determine what is the best-practice response. Another of the issues workfare raises for family resource programs concerns the contradiction between the compulsory requirement for people to participate in work and the strong voluntary tradition of community programs that depends on people's freedom to choose when and how they participate. We will return to this question in the final chapter of the report in discussing some of the issues facing voluntary programs.

### **Youth programs**

Some of the family resource programs in the study offered a variety of employment support and community development programs directed specifically to teens and older youths. Such program components as homework help, tutoring programs, ESL and literacy programs, computer clubs and other computer literacy training served both a preventive and a remedial purpose, offering students opportunities to broaden their skills and knowledge, as well as helping students obtain special assistance when they needed it. A number of family resource programs (Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society, South East Grey Community Outreach and the Port au Port Community Education Initiative) worked in or with local schools and businesses to offer career and employment counselling and practical job experiences to youth. As well, most of the family resource programs in the case studies sample offered placements and staff supervision to allow high school, community college and university students to complete their practicum requirements.

Sometimes the employment support programs for youth included a community development aspect which gave young people a chance to work and earn some money, while at the same time contributing to their communities. For example, Pritchard Place Drop-In Centre, a part of Andrews Street Family Centre, took part in a summer employment project funded by the Rotary Club that offered young people a \$200 honorarium for doing community work by helping senior citizens with small projects such as cutting grass and cleaning windows, or by taking part in a community clean-up. The Port au Port Community Education Initiative, based in community schools along the southwest coast of Newfoundland, had the most comprehensive range of youth literacy, career counselling and employment support programs of all the family resource programs in the study sample. One of the many programs offered by this group—the “Endless Possibilities” Youth Corps—combined career planning and work placements in family resource programs in a very holistic manner that benefited everyone concerned. It is described in detail in the practice example that follows. The Port au Port Community Education Initiative also sponsored another Youth Corps project, called Community Literacy teams. Unemployed young adults who have completed high school or post secondary education were hired to work with students on a number of literacy-related activities.

## Practice example: A youth employment program in a family support context

The “Endless Possibilities” Youth Corps is a collaborative project of the Port au Port Community Education Initiative and the Bay St. George Community Action Committee, based in Stephenville, Newfoundland. The project, funded by Youth Services Canada, is administered by the Community Education Initiative; project staff are supervised by the coordinator of the Community Action Committee. The youth corps is made of up eighteen participants (young men and women, aged 18–24 years) who had previously left school or were unemployed. The youth corps program offers participants personal career counselling to help them to develop their own career plans through exploring their personal interests and strengths, and analyzing the job market. As a result of their participation in the youth corps, some young people may decide to return to their studies; others learn more about their work interests, and a few work towards setting up their own small business. An important part of the youth corps experience is the practical experience the young people gain from working in the school-based family resource centres operated by the Community Action Committee. The youth were divided into teams, with each team being responsible for working in two of the family resource centres, assisting resource centre staff with various aspects of their work, such as taking part in setting up and organizing activities and making home visits. As part of this experience the youth corps participants also attended in-service training workshops for resource centre staff on operating early intervention and parenting support programs. This holistic, collaborative approach provided multiple benefits for everyone involved:

- **Youth corps participants** - benefited by earning money, by learning more about their personal skills and interests through career counselling, by receiving peer support, and by finding out about new job possibilities. Because their placements offered meaningful work that clearly contributed to the well-being of children and families in their community, they gained increased self-esteem and a sense that they were needed and that what they did mattered. Although they were not formal learning goals, youth corps participants also learned more about parenting and caring for young children, about community resources that are available to support families and about what it means to be good citizens.
- **Family resource centre staff** - benefited from new energy and ideas, as well as the additional hands and minds to help with their work. As a result, staff could begin to offer new programs or extend existing ones. The availability of additional help meant that the work was less stressful, and created a higher morale among staff. Having younger men and women available as staff also provided an interesting complement to the young and middle-aged women that typically work in resource centres.
- **Program participants** - children and parents— benefited from the extra attention and greater variety of activities that the increased staff made possible. The children in particular enjoyed the rough and tumble play and the sports activities and other adventures that the young men added to their more usual activities. Permanent staff were also freed up to do more home visits and individual follow-up with families.
- **The community** - benefited by having more involved, responsible youth. For example, as a result of his experience in the youth corps one young man, who went on to community college to study, decided to offer his services as a volunteer in a family resource program in that area. When young people are offered meaningful work, there are likely to be fewer incidences of disruptive, violent, alienated behaviours. They also learn about the importance of good citizenship and of collective responsibility for others.

## Concluding Comments

Most of the family resource programs studied are still in the early, exploratory stages of offering employment support and community economic development programs, although for the reasons discussed above, there is a growing interest in developing program components in these areas. As a result, program representatives need

*The work of community economic development and family support practitioners is mutually reinforcing, but practitioners often do not see it that way, and foundations do not fund it that way. The dichotomy of physical and economic development versus social service provision and family support has created artificial disciplinary boundaries and competition for resources that undermine the strengths that each group of practitioners brings to the effort of building sustainable communities. If physical and economic development is the hardware that defines the set of opportunities within a community, the social service and family support activities are the software that make it run. Thus, the challenge is to find ways to form strategic alliances that will foster the creation of a more holistic vision of community and encourage comprehensive responses to community needs that are unrestricted by disciplinary boundaries and narrow funding prerogatives. Family support practitioners and community economic development practitioners should join forces to become stronger and more united advocates for the community and each other (Harris, 1997, p. 5)*

increased opportunities to learn about how these programs work, about what funding is available, about what is involved in their set up and operation, as well as how they might be linked with, and complement existing employment support and CED programs that are operating in their communities. While not an essential component of a family resource program, employment support and CED program components can be a useful complement to more traditional parent-child focused programs. Their location in a family resource setting may make them more accessible to certain groups such as single-parent mothers, because other supports such as childminding and child care can be provided or arranged. Funders of employment support and CED programs need to be encouraged to add family resource programs to their list of potential program providers. Funding and operating criteria should be reviewed to be more sensitive to the requirements of working from a community-based setting.

While Human Resources Development Canada's support for community economic development initiatives has faded in recent years, interest in CED is growing in other quarters. For example, a recent news release by the Canadian Council on Social Development (February, 19, 1998) recommended that the 1998/99 federal budget include funding for community economic development to improve employment opportunities for Canadians:

*Useful long-term jobs could be created by community economic development (CED) organizations if the federal government bolstered their resources for infrastructure and wage subsidies. Federal action could allow community organizations to hire youth interns. By assisting the creation of CED corporations, worker co-ops and similar organizations, the federal government could spark needed community activities, increased consumer spending, and of course, jobs. In effect this represents a "two for one" deal that will put Canadians-at-risk to work and get more dollars surging through our economy—while fighting the deficit (p. 2).*

There has also been a growing interest in linking family support and CED programs in the United States. Recently, the Family Resource Coalition's *Report* devoted an entire issue (Fall, 1997) to exploring the links between family support and CED. Included is a summary of a recent survey of California family support programs conducted by the National Economic Development and Law Centre (1997). The survey found that family support programs in California were engaged in a number of activities to enhance family economic security and promote parental employment. These activities included hiring participants to work in programs; employment brokering or assisting participants to be hired by local employers; self-employment or micro-enterprise development; and nonprofit enterprise development to create new jobs. At a community level, the family resource programs participating in the survey were also engaged in mutual assistance activities to lower families' costs of living and to impact on community-wide economic exchange; development of affordable housing; quality child care; building partnerships between family support and community development organizations; and developing more broadly based community economic initiatives (p. 18-21). The California findings about the kinds of CED activities engaged in by family resource programs are similar to those identified in a number of the programs in the case studies sample.

In her comments about the elements involved in successful community rebuilding, Schorr (1997) sums up the importance of taking a holistic approach to supporting families and addressing poverty:

*Successful initiatives combine action in the economic, service, education, physical development, and community-building domains. The hallmark of the new community initiatives is the determination to go beyond fixing individual problems. They set out "to foster a fundamental transformation of poor neighbourhoods, and of the circumstances and opportunities of individuals and families who live there." They reflect the conviction that past efforts have been fundamentally flawed because they attempted to address the many problems clustered among people in poverty just one problem at a time (p. 27).*

## II. Covering Basic Necessities: Food Security and Housing

*Nutrition is one of the most powerful factors in the growth and development of infants and children. A healthy diet is important throughout life, but it is vital in the early years. We associate severe malnutrition among children with poor countries and situations of famine and war, but even peaceful, developed countries such as Canada have children who are suffering the effects of undernourishment. A symptom of this is the fact that food banks have become a common institution in Canada. They help feed thousands of families who are working at low-paid jobs or living on social assistance—families without enough money for adequate meals, plus rent, utilities and clothing (Guy, 1997, p. 50).*

### The Need for Food Programs

When the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs conducted its survey of 550 family resource programs in 1994, few programs reported that they offered food-related program components. Only 9% of responding programs had food banks or worked closely with one, and only 7% offered community kitchens

(Kellerman & Williams). While some food programs may not have been reported at that time because they tend to be taken for granted and seen as an integral part of a number of other programs, there are indications that across the country, food-related programs have become an increasingly important part of the services family resource programs offer. They are a clear response to the increasing poverty facing many families and to the difficulties parents experience in providing basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter. Reports from across the country indicate the seriousness of the problem. For example, a survey of food bank recipients in Edmonton found that:

*One in four surveyed parents (26%) reported that their children had missed meals an average of six times in the previous month due to lack of food ... sixty-one percent of family heads went without food for a least one whole day in the previous month as a result of food shortages ... and fifty-two percent of family heads report their children's dietary needs were not met in the previous month (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 1998).*

In Ontario, the Ontario Social Safety NetWork (1997) reported that:

*Ontario is facing a hunger epidemic. Food bank use has skyrocketed (some examples: a 102% increase at a Belleville food bank from June of 1995 to June 1996; a 150% increase at the Rainy River food bank, and a nearly 400% increase in emergency food calls to a London agency). More people, including children, now go hungry regularly in Ontario (p. 6).*

## Food-related Programs in the Case Studies

Family resource programs in the study offered a wide range of food-related programs that not only fed people, but also helped to educate them about good nutrition, about food preparation and the economical buying of food. The list of food-related programs is as follows:

- prenatal nutrition (education, individual consultations, food supplements)
- nutrition education groups, community kitchens, canning and teaching kitchens
- snacks
- breakfast and lunch programs, community dinners, supper clubs
- kindergarten milk program
- food-buying club and bulk food purchasing
- food banks and food distribution
- food vouchers
- food-bingo programs

Community kitchens were common, and more were being planned. In some parts of the country the CAPC-funded family resource programs in the study were linked with the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program and so were able to offer nutrition and support programs to pregnant women. Two of the family resource programs in the study (the North End Parent Resource Centre and Moncton Early Family Intervention Program) had to cut food distribution programs and a food bank just prior to the study because of insufficient funding.

In addition to food programs, family resource centres also offered other kinds of material support to families, including clothing exchanges, furniture distribution, laundry facilities, free hair cuts and hairdressing services and free telephone access. Of these services, clothing exchanges were the most common, being offered by almost all family resource programs in the study sample.

## Housing

Between 1990 and 1995, the number of poor children in families living in unaffordable rental housing increased 68% from 339,000 to 569,000 (Campaign 2000, p. 6). The Canadian Council on Social Development also found that in 1993 Canadian children living in the poorest families were twice as likely to live in poor quality housing, needing major repairs. (1996, p. 14).

While finding adequate, affordable shelter is a problem for many poor families, housing programs were available in only a very limited number of family resource programs in the study sample. Kiwassa Neighbourhood House built 23 units of affordable housing—the May McLean Place—next door to its new building. The Calgary Catholic Immigration Society provided resettlement housing on a short-term basis in The Margaret Chisholm Resettlement Centre to assist newcomers when they first arrive in Canada; they also helped families to

locate more permanent housing. The Moncton Early Family Intervention Program operated the Future Horizons project which offers housing to families of children participating in the Headstart program; it has been funded by CMHC and New Brunswick Housing. In 1994, the project owned twelve homes located in various residential areas in Moncton. Parents who were offered accommodation must either have been working or pursuing an education. Rent was based on family income and the families could live in the housing for five years or longer, if they continued to pursue their goals. In Winnipeg, the Andrews Street Family Centre, with funding from Health Canada, had begun an employment project to form a workers' co-operative to carry out housing repairs and train local residents to do housing renovations.

## Practice Example

*One of many programs offered by East York/East Toronto Family Resources, is a food program located in St. Paul's School. "Parents and grandparents from the neighbouring Regent Park and Moss Park housing developments arrive with children and are warmly welcomed. There's time to talk to each one. If it's a Monday or Wednesday, volunteer cooks start preparing the lunch. With a single stove, nutritious meals are served to over 100 people, including one of the classes in the school on a rotating basis. Like manna from heaven, the non-perishable ingredients for the lunch have come from the Daily Bread Food Bank and the perishables from Second Harvest, retrieved from the kitchen of the Royal York Hotel. Food is also purchased through the Breakfast for Learning Foundation and the United Way Winter Relief Fund. During one of the weekly discussions, parents and staff thought it would be good for the kindergarten children to receive milk a couple of times a week. Mere details such as how to pay for it or where to store it were no deterrent. The United Way was approached for a grant... and the pastor of St. Paul's parish...located an industrial-sized refrigerator and had it moved into the building..." (Crean, 1996).*

*Housing brings children both shelter and a social environment arising out of location. Characteristics of the environment such as safety, opportunity resources, cohesion and engagement also influence child outcomes. Neighbourhoods with a mix of income and occupational status appear to better support educational attainment than settings of concentrated disadvantage. Living in mixed neighbourhoods confers a greater sense of civic equality and responsibility since children become part of a common life whatever their backgrounds (Novick and Shillington, 1997, p. 25).*

The availability of affordable housing for lower-income families is likely to become an even greater problem in the next few years as the impact of the federal devolution of social housing to provincial governments begins to be felt. Campaign 2000 (1997) notes that only two provinces have maintained contributions to new affordable housing. The Ontario Social Safety NetWork reported growing numbers of homeless families, and of people going without food and necessities to pay rent. "In Metro Toronto in 1995, 33% of social assistance recipients paid above their maximum shelter allowance in rent; by April 1996, the percent had doubled to 66%" (p. 6). While developing and administering housing projects may be beyond the scope of most family resource programs, it is important for family support practitioners to monitor developments in this area and to explore various approaches to addressing families' needs for affordable housing. Possibilities include joining with other community groups to advocate on behalf of families' needs for shelter, assisting families to locate low-cost housing and to deal with landlord/tenant disputes.

# CHAPTER 7

## Key Themes and Related Issues

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### Introduction

While a number of important issues have been considered at various points in earlier sections of the report, this final chapter is devoted to discussing some of the remaining themes and issues identified by program representatives during the research process. The four remaining topics that will be discussed are:

- Coordination, collaboration, and integration of services
- Funding barriers identified by family resource programs
- Building communities: the role of voluntary agencies and citizenship development
- Program operations.

Each of these topics is complex and ideally merits more extensive consideration. However, it is only possible to provide a brief overview of key points and where appropriate, suggestions for future action and/or research. The chapter concludes with a summary of program representatives' comments and reflections about the most important lessons they have learned from many years of practical experience.

### I. Coordination, Collaboration, and Integration of Services: Multi-service and Multi-disciplinary Linkages and Partnerships

Prior to conducting this study the researchers were aware that one of the defining characteristics of family resource programs was their involvement in various linkages and partnerships with other groups and community services. In fact, family resource programs are often encouraged by funders to work this way. What was surprising to discover, however, was the sheer number and complexity of the connections that had been developed by the programs in the study sample. As discussed in Chapter 4, the focus on coordination and collaboration arises, in part, from an interest in working more holistically and responsively to support families and children. Agranoff and Pattakos (1979) for example, suggest that the purpose of integration at the service delivery level results from a view that:

... regards clients as complex individuals with multiple needs which must be addressed by a multidisciplinary approach that encourages the provider to engage in many different strategies and to invoke many services. Such a perspective is seen as holistic and acknowledges that client problems generally are intertwined and cannot be remedied as discrete needs (cited in Kagan and Neville, 1993, p. 90).

Discussing coordination and collaboration is complex not only because of the various kinds of connections that organizations and groups make with one another, but also because the terminology is imprecise and words such as coordination and collaboration are often used interchangeably. To clarify them, Mattessich & Monsey (1992) have proposed the following definitions of more common terms:

*Cooperation:* is characterized by informal relationships that exist without any commonly defined mission, structure or planning effort. Information is shared as needed, and authority is retained by each organization...

*Coordination:* is characterized by more formal relationships and understanding of compatible missions. Some planning and division of roles are required, and communication channels are established. Authority still rests with individual organizations...resources are available to participants and rewards are mutually acknowledged.

*Collaboration:* is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes: a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards (p. 39)

While larger family resource programs offer a broad spectrum of services those with a more limited focus often seek to broaden their scope by linking and/or partnering with others to create more seamless services that span traditional categorical boundaries and eligibility criteria. In addition to collaborating with outside groups, larger family resource programs must also work to ensure that there are good internal linkages among staff working in different program areas so that families receive complementary services and supports.

Family resource programs commonly link with other community groups and services in areas such as child care, health, education, child protection, community development and advocacy activities. These connections can occur both formally and informally at all levels of the organization, and include Board members, managerial and direct service staff. Linkages and partnerships run the gamut from informal connections (referrals, information exchange, committee and case management meetings), to more formally constituted coordinating groups, task forces, and community councils.

In some instances, these co-operative and collaborative contacts can result in the greater integration of services through:

- the sharing of space or the co-location of complementary services (e.g., South East Grey Community Outreach and its local school board; East York/East Toronto Family Resources and Senior Link and Neighbourhood Link; Peterborough Family Enrichment Centre and Kawartha Child Care Services)
- the amalgamation or merger of groups and organizations (e.g., Andrews Street Family Centre)
- the secondment of staff from various organizations to start a new venture (e.g., Penticton & District Community Resources Society, and the Family Enrichment Programs in elementary schools)

- collaboration at an administrative level, where groups come together to share accounting and other administrative responsibilities, such as developing common operating policies (e.g., Kiwassa Neighbourhood House and Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre).

What was particularly interesting was that some of the larger family resource programs in the case studies sample such as Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, Chilliwack Community Services, Penticton & District Community Resources Society and the Port au Port Community Education Initiative were working simultaneously at most of the levels outlined above.

The researchers originally set out to track the community linkages and partnerships of the programs in the case studies sample. However, it quickly became evident that to do so in any rigorous fashion would require a separate study on its own, involving exploratory work on how to capture and conceptualize the sheer number of contacts and complexity of the work being done. In one family resource program, for example, representatives described an administrative exercise that program managers had carried out to track their own involvement in various external co-operative and collaborative efforts with local service organizations. Discovering that their contacts numbered in the hundreds, the managers reviewed these linkages to try to cut down on duplication and eliminate less essential contacts. In the end, they were left with a significant number of connections that needed to be maintained to keep their organization's programs operating responsively.

Program representatives' comments made it clear that coordination of services does not happen on its own. It requires concerted planning, ongoing attention and follow-up on the part of many people working at all levels in an organization. These efforts are vital because they are what make it possible for staff to find ways to individualize services to meet the needs of specific families and children. It is not accidental that a number of staff positions in family resource programs include the term "coordinator" in their title. As the example given in Chapter 5 of the Child Care Manager of Kiwassa Neighbourhood House's Hub model demonstrates, the coordinating role involves managing a number of essential communicative and administrative functions to enable the various program components to operate in a complementary fashion. What can sometimes create difficulties is that this work is often taken for granted by practitioners, and unrecognized by funders.

#### **Program representatives commented:**

*Family resource programs need to partner with other community resources; we need to be proactive in making links to facilitate the sharing of resources.*

*It's important to promote your services to the broader community and to develop community contacts. Work for good communication with other agencies. Show respect and understanding for the work that each is doing.*

*It's important to be connected to other organizations, to be well-informed. You can't work alone. These connections help us know what's going on elsewhere in the community, help us to make referrals and to avoid duplicating services.*

*Our large community coalition provides a structure for community organizations and parent representatives to link with one another. It provides us with a lot of contacts, and it also helps to influence funders.*

*Partnerships is a buzzword—everyone wants to get on the bandwagon. It's important that partnerships mean real service, and not just lip service.*

The researchers attempted to capture some of the most obvious linkages and collaborative efforts in the program profiles section of this report. However, because of the number and complexity of these connections it was only possible to report them in the most general sense. In analyzing the various connections, it would appear that the linkages and partnerships family resource programs make serve a variety of functions including:

1. *information-exchange and personalized referrals* to meet specific families' and children's needs. As one program representative suggested, it's important to be "resource rich", and for programs to be informed and up-to-date about what resources are available in their communities.
2. *case management and coordination of services* to individuals and families in order to develop individualized responses and not overwhelm or confuse program participants with the (sometimes conflicting) demands of multiple service providers. As noted earlier, family resource staff often help families by mediating on their behalf with other service providers.
3. *sharing of program and administrative resources* such as space, equipment, and technical knowledge about administrative and operating procedures, or providing resource people to help with training for staff and volunteers. Over time, and if trust develops among those involved, this kind of sharing may lead groups to make more formal connections such as planning joint service delivery or amalgamating services.
4. *needs assessment, planning and coordination of services* at a community level. Community groups and organizations identify critical needs and issues, and decide who does what.
5. *joining forces with others to advocate* about a variety of issues.
6. *offering consultation and support*, for example, when more experienced programs assist newer programs to become established by helping to write funding proposals and to develop programs.

Part of the complexity involved in collaboration stems from the wide range of services offered, and the differing philosophies, terminologies, and styles of work adopted by multi-disciplinary staff. The different disciplines also vary in terms of the amount of authority and power they bring to their work. Social workers, early childhood educators and public health nurses do not enjoy equal authority and public recognition of their skills and knowledge. This can lead to challenges when services collaborate. For example, a few of the programs in the study sample had integrated child protection services into their organization; most were working with some families with children considered at-risk for abuse. In several settings program representatives raised issues related to child protection practices. They described problems resulting from different philosophies in working with families—a deficit approach, for instance, compared to a family support approach. In their perception, the adversarial stance associated with intervention in cases of abuse was sometimes inappropriate. Adopting a family support approach and its emphasis on empowering families may also lead to differing expectations and conflicts about the respective roles played by a family resource program and other community services.

Compounding these kinds of philosophical and practice issues is the dilemma that, on the one hand, governments and funders are increasingly requiring human services to work more cooperatively. On the other hand, the serious cuts to funding many organizations have experienced leave them feeling insecure and threatened, sparking greater competitiveness and territoriality. When organizations jointly plan to share their resources, the results can be beneficial. However, it takes time to build trust and work through differences in

philosophy and organizational style. When collaboration is forced, destructive processes may occur, seriously undermining staff morale and ultimately, the quality of services provided.

The family resource programs in the case studies sample provide a number of examples of skillful collaboration and coordination. For example, Andrews Street Family Centre, which was established through the amalgamation of a number of smaller community programs, developed a set of principles to guide its partnerships and collaboration with other groups. Many more examples of collaboration and coordination can be found in the program profiles section of the report.

Because coordination and collaboration are such fundamental aspects of work in family resource programs, there is a need for more detailed research to clarify what are “best practices” along the continuum from the most informal kinds of co-operation to the more formal collaboration and integration of services. Although work has been done in the United States to examine strategies for collaboration to reduce fragmentation of service delivery and promote service integration, similar work is required that is sensitive to Canadian circumstances. Questions need to be answered about when and how programs should consider moving from informal co-operative relations to more formal collaborative ones. It would also be useful to examine how to strengthen collaboration between family resource programs and child care, child protection, health, education, and employment support services. For example, in reference to the problem of working with child protection agencies discussed above, it would be helpful to have a better picture of the ways in which family resource programs might work more effectively with child protection services. Issues related to respective service provider roles and staff training requirements also need to be explored and resolved. Such research would be timely given that child protection services are currently under review and re-organization in many provinces.

### **Practice Example: Andrews Street Family Centre**

Andrews Street Family Centre established the following principles to guide the creation and maintenance of its partnerships and formal linkages with other groups and organizations in the community, and to translate into practice its stated goal of empowering neighbourhood residents. In the Centre’s view, collaborating groups must:

- share a common understanding of the assumptions under which the activities that are the focus of the partnership are carried out—an emphasis must be placed on looking for the potential within neighbourhood residents, not on their limitations.
- clarify at the outset, the level of responsibility and decision-making involved in the work to be undertaken (i.e., there must be effective mutual control over any action).
- recognize that Andrews Street staff/volunteers involved in the partnership do not operate within a hierarchical structure, and that the structures of the partnering organization should not serve to limit the effectiveness of the activities undertaken by these individuals.
- recognize that the focus of the work being undertaken must be service oriented, and emphasize the responsibility to the individual and family, and not be oriented to the organization or system.
- actively practice community-based policies and principles.

## II. Funding Barriers Identified by Programs in the Study Sample

### Funding Sources

The funding sources of the family resource programs in the study sample were very diverse, and program budgets were often complex. Because of the multi-disciplinary range of program components offered, many family resource programs drew on a number of funding streams at the federal, provincial, regional and local levels of government, as well as on funding from the United Way, foundations and their own fundraising efforts. At the time of the study, the range of government funding sources (some of which have subsequently disappeared or changed) included the following:

#### *Federal government:*

- Health Canada: Community Action Program for Children; Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
- Human Resources Development Canada: Youth Services Canada; Student Summer Employment
- National Literacy Secretariat
- Department of National Defense
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

#### *Provincial government ministries (provincial terminology varies widely):*

- Children and Families
- Social and Community Services
- Citizenship and Immigration
- Economic Development and Rural Renewal
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Human Resources and Employment (Skills and Training)
- Multiculturalism
- Tourism
- Women's Equality
- *Programme d'éducation populaire autonome*, in Quebec.

#### *Regional and Municipal:*

- School boards
- Local and/or regional municipal governments
- CLSCs (local community service centres) in Quebec.

*Other sources:* In addition to government funding, a number of family resource programs also received funding from non-governmental sources such as the United Way, foundations, local service groups, and by engaging in their own fundraising activities. Many family resource programs were also extremely skilled at reducing costs by borrowing space and equipment, obtaining donations in kind and making use of volunteer help whenever possible.

## **Funding Issues: Barriers to Effective Work**

Across the country, representatives from family resource programs identified a number of funding issues that created barriers to carrying out their work effectively. Although differences in provincial funding contributed to regional variations, a number of issues were consistently identified, including:

- the need for adequate, stable funding sources
- the need for funding and accountability mechanisms that recognize the nature and complexity of family resource programs
- the problem of dealing with funding fads, targeting and other funding criteria that contradict family support principles and practices
- the impact of uncertain funding on staff morale and program stability
- the lack of funding for after school and teen programs.

### **The need for adequate and stable funding**

The lack of adequate, stable funding for family support was identified by program representatives as the most common barrier to carrying out their work. For the most part, family resource programs have developed in the absence of clear policy, legislative and funding frameworks at either the federal or provincial government levels. Because many programs cut across traditional categorical boundaries by combining health, recreation, education, and social services, they do not readily fit into categorically structured government departments and funding streams. As a result they sometimes experience considerable difficulties in obtaining the necessary recognition and funding to enable them to carry out their work effectively. As well, the trend in a number of provinces to download responsibility for social services to regional or community levels has created additional demands on family resource programs and other community services. Often, sufficient funding is not made available to support these new demands (National Union of Public and General Employees, 1996; United Way of Greater Toronto, 1997). Between government cutbacks on the one hand and increased demands from the public on the other, family resource programs urgently require additional funding to support a wide range of program components.

The considerable growth of food-related programs is one indicator of how family resource programs have stepped in to help families weather the impact of provincial cuts to social assistance. Unfortunately, funding to enable these efforts is often precarious. At the time of writing, for example, funding to support school breakfast and lunch programs in Metro Toronto was uncertain, dependent on the approval of an additional \$700,000 by Metro Toronto City Council (Monsebraaten, 1998). The *Toronto Star* reported: “The province’s funding for student nutrition programs runs out this week and principals from most participating schools fear their programs may collapse if the city doesn’t come to the rescue ...” While the Ontario government had indicated their intention to continue sharing the costs of nutrition programs with the municipality, no decisions had been made

about the amount of money that would be provided, or when it would be made available. At a program level, staff and volunteers however, are faced each day with hungry children whose needs cannot be put on hold until the funding maze is sorted out. Family resource programs do not operate with budget surpluses and rarely have reserve funds to fall back on to help them bridge these funding lapses. Given the uncertainty of program funding in cases such as these, family resource programs are often forced to shut down specific program components. In the case studies sample, the Moncton Early Family Intervention Program and the North End Parent Resource Centre in Halifax had to end food distribution programs and a food bank because their funding was insufficient, not because families no longer needed help to obtain food.

As the impact of reduced federal funding associated with the Canada Health and Social Transfer begins to filter down into provincial cuts to social service programs, the focus for many family resource programs is shifting to survival. More and more they are having to concentrate on how to find funding to keep basic programs going, rather than on what can be done to improve the way various programs are delivered. The Upper Fraser Valley Communities for Children and Families Coalition, for example, articulated concerns about their experience with CAPC funding:

*... uncertainties around ongoing CAPC funding caused all CAPC coalition members to feel stress and indecision about what services could remain, what would be cut back ... Having to think about reducing an already minimal budget meant first priority was given to just keeping the facility doors open, and dollars for basic items such as supplies, mileage, guest speakers and staff hours were therefore threatened (p. 21).*

Smaller family resource programs without core funding are particularly vulnerable to the uncertainty brought on by the constant need to seek project funding that is governed by funders' time lines and eligibility criteria instead of program or community needs.

### **The need for funding mechanisms that recognize the nature and complexity of programs**

The fact that funding for family resource programs is so complex and diverse has had both positive and negative implications for the day-to-day operation of programs. Because most of the more established family resource programs obtain funding from several sources, initially they may be somewhat less vulnerable to funding cuts than more categorical programs that rely on one source. If one particular funding source is eliminated, there are usually other sources to fall back on, so that not all program components are jeopardized. Having to deal with so many funding sources however, means keeping accounts and reporting to funders with slightly different requirements and often creates an accounting and budgeting nightmare. It also demands an organizational sophistication that is more characteristic of a large bureaucracy than of a community-based program. Program representatives responsible for administration often become very skilled at seeking out funding possibilities and in preparing funding proposals and reports, but juggling so many funding sources takes important time away from program operation. Energy that might be better put to program development is used in administration and making reports that take more time than they ought to. This is because of the lack of standardized reporting requirements and agreement among funders (and programs) about such things as units of service and outcome measures.

A number of program representatives also expressed concerns that time lines for developing funding proposals were far too short. Often there was not sufficient lead time for consultation with participants and the development

of collaborative partnerships. Meeting funding deadlines often meant ignoring or undermining the community development process many had been working hard to foster. Short time lines also limited the ability of smaller grassroots programs to develop proposals because they did not usually have administrative staff free to respond quickly.

A related issue program representatives identified was the lack of additional funding to support evolving programs. When the social support and community development processes are successful, new ideas and ventures are often generated which may require additional funding to become established. Few funding initiatives recognize the need to allow for supplementary funding requests to support program developments that were not even contemplated when the original proposal was developed.

### **Dealing with funding fads and other problematic funding criteria**

Other funding issues that programs identified go beyond the need for additional dollars and have do with the way funding measures are designed. Much of the present funding available to family resource programs is restricted to specific target populations and/or specific functions. This categorical orientation can lead to fragmentation of service delivery and limit a program's responsiveness. When funding criteria are too narrow, they restrict community input and direction, and can set up a process that can compromise local knowledge, responsibility and initiatives.

Funding fads which emphasize a particular issue, or target a specific service activity are particularly problematic because they generally limit the range of possible program responses. For example, while government funding to support outreach and home-visiting programs is important, it should not be done in isolation from other support services. For home visits to be preventive, home visitors need to work closely with a network of community resources to which they refer families who require help with such things as finding employment, child care, or specialized health services.

#### **Program representatives commented:**

*Funders often want statistics and immediate results. Sometimes funders and policy makers don't understand the incremental nature of change; also, "slow and steady" doesn't always appear to be "innovative".*

*The lack of funding for administration and management is a problem. [Project] grants are less and less likely to provide money for this.*

*Funders sometimes have stringent criteria; we have to find ways to get around them and go about our business in our own way. Funders don't help you carry out your mission, they make political decisions to target.*

*Government funding often has too many expectations and strings attached; it doesn't allow enough flexibility to meet community needs.*

*We've learned not to lose sight of our objectives; we must not be subservient to funders, we have to be sufficiently independent and alert.*

*Programs sometimes grow very quickly due to need. Programs also expand through good community development work, but funding doesn't take this into account.*

*Sometimes we have a fear of speaking out on public issues because of concern about losing funding or alienating potential funders. We try to get families to speak out on their own behalf.*

“Flavour-of-the-month” funding can also be problematic because it often characterizes as “new” initiatives, programs and practices that many groups have recognized as effective and have worked for years to implement. Unfortunately, when funding criteria for these “new” initiatives are written, programs that have struggled with the pioneering work often find they do not qualify, with funding going instead to programs that may just be starting up.

Some of the problems outlined above were evident in an example cited in the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs’ submission to the Axworthy Social Security Review (1994). Association members raised concerns that several very effective family resource programs established in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland under the Child Care Initiatives Fund (which was discontinued) had been excluded from CAPC funding largely on the grounds that they were not new ventures and that they were not sufficiently targeting high-risk families. Rather than supporting the efforts of existing programs and allowing them to continue their work, the federal-provincial funding criteria that were adopted meant that these programs were allowed to go under, while new groups had to start from the beginning. The researchers heard variations on this story involving other funders in different parts of the country. The loss of a program can be particularly destructive and disillusioning to program participants, many of whom have begun to form trusting relationships with staff and other participants and have started to take important steps to change their lives. The empowerment process depends on this trust and on developing nurturing relationships. These qualities cannot easily be transferred or replaced by the introduction of even the most competent alternative program; participants’ repeated experiences of loss can lead to cynicism, alienation and despair.

### **Targeted funding**

Targeting services solely to high-risk groups was also seen as destructive by many program representatives. They were concerned that it often leads to labelling and stigmatization of children and families, and tends to perpetuate their sense of low self-esteem. Targeting to high-risk groups can also seriously undermine program effectiveness by restricting opportunities for the development of mutuality and social support. Garbarino (1990) and others have written about the problems associated with high-risk neighbourhoods where few people are “free from drain” or able to reach out to others to offer support. He notes that socially impoverished neighbourhoods “tend to operate on a ‘scarcity’ economy when it comes to social relations. Mutuality is suppressed by fears of exploitation and of being a burden and excessively beholdng” (p. 89). The Communities for Children and Families, Upper Fraser Valley CAPC Coalition, of which Chilliwack Community Services is a member, makes a similar point about targeting in its evaluation report, which also reiterates basic family support principles:

*Most coalition members had concerns about the use of the term ‘at-risk’ to describe the population of families the funding criteria said ... the programs were supposed to focus on. The coalition believed that pooling defined ‘at-risk’ families was stigmatizing and would restrict those families from receiving modelling and support from others ... “we don’t want to gather demographics [information] because we believe all parents can be ‘at-risk’ and all parents deserve these programs. We justify not gathering demographics to indicate ‘at-risk’ because in our opinion there are many ‘at-risk’ people, being ‘at-risk’ is hard to define because it isn’t just because someone is poor, a single parent, or a Native person “(1997, p. 19).*

A 1994 British Columbia study supports the Coalition's contention that not only "at-risk" families require family support services. Crane's study of public opinion regarding support for a broad range of social programs, including family support services, found that: "98% of the respondents when presented with a standard list of social service programs reported using at least one of them during the previous 12 months. Half the sample reported using between two and six of the programs; 77% ... rated the impact on their lives of one or more of these encounters as major. It is clear that social programs play a major role in the lives of the whole population, not just the 'needy'" (p. 199). The more recent Ekos survey (1997) confirmed Canadians' general support for public investments in critical social areas such as child poverty, youth unemployment, health care and education.

In his review of research and issues related to parent support programs, Powell (1993a) has quite bluntly pointed to the contradiction between a targeted approach to service delivery based on a deficit perspective and family support principles that focus on preventive and empowering approaches:

*Most members of the medical, psychological, and social work professions view families as less than capable caregivers ... Professional training programs and the pathology-oriented ethos of human service institutions are powerful socialization agents in instilling the medical model of professional-client relations ... if the nondeficit model is to have a central position in parent programs, current prevailing theories that give rise to the practice of targeting programs for specific populations will need to be abandoned or significantly modified. The dominant social service ideology is not a healthy context for the survival of nondeficit approaches (p. 233).*

In her review of U.S. research evaluating Head Start programs, Lero (in press) comments on targeting programs for children at risk. Citing Skocpol (1991) she notes that "separate service streams for ECCE [Early Childhood Care and Education] for welfare purposes and for programs for other children result in continuing segregation by class and race in many communities, are expensive, and inevitably result in less sustainable, poorer programs in the longer term."

Although targeting programs solely to high-risk families contradicts family support principles and practices, it should not be confused with the offering of more focused, specialized programs and resources to meet the needs of specific groups of families and children. For example, many family resource programs in the study sample offered support groups for parents of children with special needs, for sole support parents, for teen mothers and so forth. The important distinction here is that while family resource programs offer a nurturing place for families with special needs to come together to support each other, the overall emphasis of the program is broader, and not defined by specific categories of need. Anyone in the community can participate; having a problem is *not* the price of admission. Program participants are also viewed as being multi-dimensional. While they may require help with certain needs, at the same time they can also contribute to the program by supporting others and taking responsibility for assisting with various aspects of the program.

### **The impact of uncertain funding on staff morale and program stability**

Uncertain funding and cutbacks may also have a negative impact on staff morale. Staff in many programs increasingly face greater challenges because of the growing poverty and stress experienced by the families they work with. They may also be under considerable stress themselves because of uncertainty about whether their jobs and the programs they have worked hard to set up will continue. It is difficult to plan for and respond to

community needs when operating on such a funding tightrope. It is also demoralizing having to stand by watching the gains made by individual children and families slip away because various resources are being withdrawn due to delays in or loss of funding. One program representative commented:

*We're understaffed. We were understaffed even before the cuts. We've always been understaffed. This creates a feeling that we're not doing enough to help families. It's almost as if you're being set up for failure.*

At the best of times most family resource centre staff are not well paid; many do not have even the most basic employment benefits. Continuing funding uncertainty and the lack of public recognition for their work may lead to staff burn-out and turnover as experienced people leave to seek more stable, better remunerated, socially recognized work. Another program representative explained: "Staff morale can be low as a result of having to continually struggle with funding and other barriers. This results in burn-out, high turnover and the loss of good people."

### **Neglect of after school and teen programs**

Because of an emphasis on early intervention and prevention, much of the funding that is presently available to family resource programs tends to be focused on the needs of families with young children. A number of program representatives expressed concern about the general lack of funding for after school programs for older children and recreational, literacy and employment support programs for teens. They also commented on the social marginalization of this age group.

Instead of viewing funding to youth programs as a form of social welfare, funding should be considered as an investment that pays compound dividends. Young people can gain a sense of purpose through participating in meaningful work, which, at the same time, addresses some of the pressing needs in their communities. Furthermore, as Novick (1997) clearly points out:

*The lifestyle connections between child poverty and persistent youth unemployment are ominous. Young people are more than a new cohort of workers. They are also the next generation of prospective parents, many of whom will soon be entering into periods of family formation. The economic hardships experienced by young people, unable to secure sustaining attachments in the labour market, are seeding the next generation of child poverty in Canada (p. 35).*

### **The Need for Legislative and Policy Frameworks**

The need for adequate and stable funding to support family resource programs is not a new issue. The Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, various provincial and regional associations of family resource programs, and individual programs have repeatedly drawn attention to this issue (e.g., Kellerman & Williams, 1995; Kyle, 1994; Pittman, 1989). As an examination of the funding sources in the case studies sample indicates, at present there is no federal or provincial legislation that is specifically directed to support prevention and facilitate the development of family resource and community support services. While the federal CAPC funding has been an important funding source for a number of groups and helped to initiate family resource programs in some parts of the country, in other parts of the country it has tended to fund more categorical, health-based

approaches. As noted above, the CAPC funding criteria requiring programs to target their services to “high-risk” families have also been problematic by limiting the preventive potential of programs.

At a time when funding for social services is increasingly limited, the lack of a clear policy framework and funding arrangements to support and sustain coordinated, inter-disciplinary community services is clearly a cause for concern. While community-based family support programs do not fall under federal jurisdiction, the leadership role taken by the federal government in stimulating the development of innovative programs through initiatives such as CAPC has been crucial in demonstrating the value of these multi-disciplinary approaches. In the United States, where the federal government similarly does not have primary jurisdiction for social programs, federal legislation was introduced in 1993 specifically to support a national *Family Preservation and Support Services Program*. Its purpose was to promote “the expansion of family support and family preservation services and stimulate broader systemic reforms” (Family Resource Coalition, October 1993, p. 1). Under this legislation, family support services were defined as:

*Community-based services to promote the well-being of children and families designed to increase the strength and stability of families (including adoptive, foster and extended families), to increase parents’ confidence and competence in their parenting abilities, to afford children a stable and supportive family environment, and otherwise to enhance child development (p. 2).*

Included in this general rubric are services such as home visits and parent support groups designed to improve parenting skills, respite care, structured activities to strengthen parent-child relationships, drop-in family centres, information and referral services, and early developmental screening of children. Family preservation services were defined as “services for children and families designed to help families ... at risk or in crisis” (p. 2) and included most of the traditional child welfare services. What was particularly valuable about this legislation was that it provided a visible (and publicly accountable!) federal-state funding framework to support both family preventive and preservation services that was not buried in block social service funding and in competition with other human services. The legislation instead set out continuing provisions for funding that included cost-sharing requirements by individual states, as well as guidelines that ensure federal dollars go directly to support family resource programs and are not diverted by state authorities to other program areas. The federal guidelines also encouraged collaboration and integration of existing child welfare and family support services, in an effort to improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

This particular way of defining and organizing family and children’s services may not be exactly what is needed in Canada; it does not, for example, integrate child care with other children’s services. However, it does have the virtue of recognizing at least some of the essential family and children’s support services that need to be in place in most communities and provides the core funding necessary to support their operation. By providing core funding for family support programs the legislation also offers a more solid basis on which to build collaborative ventures and to develop the wider range of support services evidenced in more established family support programs.

Legislative and policy frameworks that provide for stable funding are only a beginning. Further work is required to develop accountability mechanisms that are more appropriate to the operation of community-based family resource programs; mechanisms that support and strengthen their work, rather than undermine it. Governments need to review their role in supporting community services, and to recognize that through their funding

provisions they too, are partners in collaboration. A 1996 study of successful government-community partnerships, prepared for Human Resources Development Canada by the New Economy Development Group, identified a number of conditions that contributed to such success, including:

- *inclusion of all stakeholders whose contribution is necessary*
- *jointly developed structures, joint ownership of decisions and collective responsibility*
- *pooling of resources*
- *long-term commitment translated into long-range comprehensive planning*
- *limited objectives and specific purposes*
- *careful selection of the issues around which a partnership is formed*
- *sufficient staff support and financial resources*
- *flexibility to evolve as the relationship develops*
- *critical mass of people in the community that support the partnership*
- *clear delineation of roles and responsibilities*
- *willingness of managers to take risks and set aside bureaucratic constraints*
- *ability to marry ideas, leadership and resources in a planned manner*
- *integration of a training component within the partnership projects (p. 144).*

When these conditions are met, the resulting benefits can include: greater “service responsiveness; empowerment of community partners; increased effectiveness in the delivery of programs and services; a sharing of the financial and political risks; and significant cost savings” (p. 145).

### III. Building Communities: The Role of Voluntary Agencies and Citizenship Development

The vital role that volunteers play in starting up programs and in sustaining their operation is one of the defining characteristics of family resource programs and an attribute of their grassroots and community-oriented nature. In the case studies sample, many of the family resource programs were started by small groups of parents (mainly mothers) and other concerned citizens who came together to address a specific need they had identified. Some of the programs studied (such as the volunteer-run Family Places supported by Chilliwack Community Services, and the community-driven Family Resource Centres sponsored by the Community Action Committee for Bay St. George) are heavily dependent on the contributions of volunteers for their day-to-day operation. Volunteers exercise their citizenship by contributing to the organizations in a number of important ways. As well as donating money, they help to organize and deliver services, to raise funds, to set policy and govern the program by becoming Board and committee members, and to advocate on behalf of their own and their neighbours’ children and families.

Social service and community organizations that grow out of citizens’ efforts on behalf of their communities make up what is called the “voluntary” sector. According to Phillips (1995) this sector performs three

interdependent roles that are distinct from the functions undertaken by government or business (for-profit enterprises). These three roles are:

- *representation* - “as expressions of community they represent the identities, interests and concerns of their communities, memberships, and clients with a view to changing public policy, educating the broader public and influencing the behaviour of society at large” (p. 9).
- *citizen engagement* - The voluntary sector develops and reinforces citizenship by providing opportunities for people to become actively engaged in the life of their communities:

*At the individual level, an important contribution of voluntarism is that it nurtures the sense that individual action is important and that the actions of people working together can make a difference. At the broader level, voluntary organizations build social capital (p. 18).*

Phillips cites work by Putnam (1993) which demonstrates that “... a network of volunteer community-based organizations builds social trust and mutual co-operation among citizens, bolsters performance of the polity and contributes to more efficient government and a stronger economy” (p. 18). Phillips and others (e.g., Canadian Association of Volunteer Bureaux and Centres, 1994) have also stressed that volunteering as an expression of citizenship is a freely chosen activity, not one that is coerced.

- *service delivery* - “a central mandate of most voluntary organizations is to do ‘good works’ in the form of direct delivery of goods and services to the community” (p. 23). Because of their close connection with the life of their community, voluntary organizations are well situated to be more responsive to local needs than more established, bureaucratic social services. Historically, voluntary organizations have often played a leadership role in initiating new programs and approaches to service delivery.

In the charitable tradition of social services, reflecting a problem-oriented approach, families and children tend to be seen one-dimensionally—as needy, or at risk. Volunteers are drawn from the more “privileged” classes to help those seen as less fortunate. One of the problems with this perspective is that it decontextualizes parents, and ignores or negates their rights as citizens and contributions as volunteers.

In moving to a family support approach and an emphasis on building community, family support programs reframe both the definition of the problem and the possible solutions. Parents and other program participants are seen as multi-dimensional: while they continue to need various kinds of help and support, they are not totally defined by their needs. Parents are also seen as volunteers who can contribute to the development and operation of the program in various ways, and as citizens who take responsibility for governing the program, for advocating on its behalf, and for developing measures that improve the quality of life in their communities. In this reframing, the traditional “noblesse oblige” sense of volunteers is replaced by participants who gain a sense of personal agency and power over at least some aspects of their lives and community through their involvement in the program. As one program representative commented: “The word ‘volunteer’ seems strange because I (as a volunteer) don’t come here to do charity work. It’s as if I was coming home, to see my friends. I come to chat, share experiences, have fun.” Another commented: “Here we don’t receive a letter at the end of the year thanking us for volunteering. It’s not that type of volunteer work. We don’t celebrate Volunteers’ Week.”

Representatives from the family resource programs in the study sample made it clear that promoting citizenship and engaging the help of program participants and other community volunteers was not something that happens

automatically. It requires staff support, conscious attention to community education and leadership development, as well as the creation of various forums to allow for discussion, planning and evaluation. In the program profiles section of this report there are many examples of how family resource programs demonstrated their commitment to promoting citizenship through community development and advocacy in a variety of ways, by:

- taking time to identify the strengths and skills that program participants and other community members could offer
- providing volunteer orientation and training programs (sometimes volunteer-led)
- designating staff specifically to provide ongoing support to volunteers
- encouraging participation in the planning, development and governance of programs through taking part in committees, advisory groups, community forums, and becoming Board members
- devoting time to Board training and development
- developing creative approaches to fundraising that involved community members and at the same time raised the public visibility of their programs
- sponsoring community celebrations and festivals that involved people of all ages in order to create pride in their neighbourhoods
- providing a place where community issues could be raised and treated seriously
- assisting participants to advocate on behalf of themselves and their community.

Some of the items on the above list may seem like fairly standard practice for those who work with volunteers. However, what were special were the creative ways in which individual family resource programs in the study translated these ideas into practice and found multiple means of involving participants in various aspects of their programs. While all programs in the study made efforts to attract and support volunteers, there was some variation in their emphasis and approach to working together for community change. Some programs tended to focus more on supporting the personal growth and development of individuals through volunteer work, and on tackling community issues if they became a problem. Other programs adopted a more conscious political and educational stance. They focused on helping participants to understand the broader social and economic forces impacting on their lives and communities and encouraged them to become engaged in advocacy about community concerns. Conscious efforts by family resource programs to foster the development and involvement of more informed citizens are illustrated in the work of programs such as: *le Carrefour familial Hochelaga*, working in the Quebec tradition of *éducation populaire autonome*; *Re-Nou-Vie* and their training of *militantes* [activists]; the North End Parent Resource Centre's linking up of program participants with Inter Pares and community building work with women in the Caribbean; and the Port au Port Community Education Initiatives' *Communication for Survival Project*.

Because of their beliefs and practices concerning interdependence, mutual responsibility and building on family and community strengths, family resource programs sometimes come into conflict with government policies about workfare and targeting high-risk families. Both compulsory workfare and the narrow targeting of programs revert back to a deficit orientation that focuses on problems, stigmatizing and labelling parents. Deficit approaches not only do not work, they are destructive because they undermine the social conditions essential for healthy growth and change (Schorr, 1997a). Their essentially authoritarian stance also undermines the emerging sense of personal agency, social support and civic mindedness that underlie truly voluntary action. As Phillips (1995) notes:

*In the discussion over workfare, it is important to keep in mind that voluntary service is not the same as voluntary participation. Above all, volunteering is a choice. Coercion into such activity or a particular organization would destroy the essential meaning of the activity. Moreover, citizen engagement is not achieved merely through the provision of free labour, but from the opportunity to undertake activities that build both civil society and democracy: to voice divergent views; put new issues on the political agenda and work together to change public policy and society at large (p. 21).*

Strengthening families and building citizenship means taking the time to allow people to build trust, to gain experience and overcome mistakes, and to discover the ways that people can make their own unique contribution in their own family life and in the larger community. This process is not something that can be forced or regimented; it requires a belief in the potential of people and their ability to grow and change, the careful nurturing of small steps, and the creation of dignity and a sense of purpose. Joan Kuyek has expressed this idea well:

*What we are faced with is really having to work at creating that kind of base in communities where people really do support each other, understand each other and know each other and have some opportunity to work together with some joy. Because they won't come together in protest if they don't understand and know each other as partners and friends. The big thing is to create the opportunity for people to take care of one another (cited in Kérisit and St-Amand, 1997, p. 147).*

## IV. Program Operations

In the interviews and focus groups undertaken during the site visits, program representatives identified a number of issues related to program operations. Major issues which will be discussed briefly below, included:

- the inadequacy of facilities
- transportation issues
- staffing issues, particularly related to training
- men's role and participation in programs.

### Facilities

Most of the fifteen programs involved in the case studies research made use of multiple sites and facilities. More than one facility was used: 1) when the main location wasn't big enough or didn't have suitable space; 2) to improve outreach to participants; or 3) when the program served several different communities. In some cases, supplementary sites were used continuously; in other cases these sites were used for mobile programs, operating on a weekly or monthly schedule.

Facilities included a single family home, small apartments and office buildings, a high-rise apartment community room, street storefronts and commercial space in a shopping mall, schools, churches, community centres and halls, a home for the aged, a residential and recreational facility for physically challenged adults, public housing facilities and buildings on a military base. Some programs also made arrangements to use other community

facilities, such as a swimming pool or a school gym. Many of the programs had renovated some of their space to meet their needs. Only one program occupied newly-built facilities specially designed to meet its own programming needs.

### Problems related to facilities

Program representatives identified a number of issues related to the adequacy of their facilities. Many facilities were inadequate in part because the space was not designed for its current use. (It should be noted that, with the exception of licensed child care programs, there are no regulations governing family resource program facilities except local building code and fire regulations.) Among the more specific concerns program representatives identified were:

#### Program representatives commented:

*Space is a chronic problem. We have concerns about size and location; and health concerns about light and ventilation.*

*We use shared space for one of our programs, so we have to set-up and take-down equipment each time we use the space; it's very time consuming.*

*Space limitations create barriers: we don't always have room for programs and activities we want to do. Successful programs grow beyond the space available.*

*We lack space to meet privately with families to discuss confidential information.*

*Noise and overcrowding can be a problem in our drop-in. Also, we lack outdoor space.*

- the inadequate size of facilities
- the awkward layout of space
- the need for space that is suitable for multi-purpose use
- the lack of space for private conversations
- high noise levels
- inadequate light and ventilation
- insufficient storage space
- inadequate entrance ways
- time consumed in doing set-up and take-down of mobile programs and other programs that share space
- zoning problems.

#### Factors contributing to problems with facilities

A number of factors clearly contribute to the difficulties programs experience in obtaining adequate physical resources. A lack of funding often limits the amount of money available to rent space or make renovations; financing for new facilities or major renovations is even more difficult to obtain. The instability of program funding also makes it difficult to enter into long term leases or to negotiate major renovations with landlords.

By their very nature, family resource programs need flexible space. The same space may be used for many different types of programming during the course of a day or week. As well, program needs change, so that the same space is used differently over time. Programs often reported that they quickly outgrew their space as the number of participants increased or new program components were added. Ironically, this was even the case for the one study site whose new facilities had been designed for the program. It soon ran out of space as demands for programming increased.

Programs also reported that finding suitable space in outreach locations was sometimes a challenge. In order to make activities more accessible, programs frequently hold drop-ins, playgroups and related program components in a number of locations, on a weekly or monthly basis. This requires negotiating part-time access to facilities such as schools, community halls and church basements. It also involves time-consuming set-up and dismantling of equipment. Moreover, toys, equipment and supplies must be transported when on-site storage is unavailable or when these items are used at multiple sites.

Program representatives also reported that management of facilities was time-consuming. As family resource programs grow and develop, staff and Board members must make ongoing decisions regarding program facilities. These may include: planning minor renovations to existing facilities (both rented and owned); identifying and assessing the suitability of potential facilities; negotiating access to free or low-cost space; and negotiating leases and improvements with landlords. Locating, assessing and upgrading facilities is time-consuming work. A small number of programs undertake extensive renovations or construct new facilities. Their staff and Board members may have had little or no previous experience in the planning, negotiating and financing required for such projects. The time and expertise required to make decisions related to facilities can present a significant challenge for programs, since most have a small number of staff members and rely heavily on volunteers.

To respond to some of the concerns identified through the case studies research, the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs has developed a manual, *Innovative Approaches to Improving Facilities: A Guide for Community Programs* (1998), to assist programs to improve their existing space, locate better facilities or develop new facilities.

## Transportation Issues

A number of programs in the case studies sample identified the lack of ready access to transportation for program participants as an ongoing barrier to their work. Some program representatives in rural areas also spoke of the challenges staff (and occasionally participants) faced in commuting long distances to program sites, particularly in winter when driving conditions were poor.

Several programs used vans (which often had been donated) to transport participants, especially children. In a few cases, program representatives used their own vehicles. Where possible, staff helped participants to set up car pooling arrangements with one another. The most common strategy used by programs was to choose locations that were as easily accessible as possible in order to minimize transportation problems.

## Staffing Issues

Many staff members who were interviewed stressed the importance of setting personal boundaries to avoid burn-out. Few staff have narrow, well-defined job descriptions; many are often called on, with little notice, to replace or provide extra support to colleagues working in other parts of the program. Such flexibility is crucial to the smooth functioning of programs, since many programs are relatively small and have few or not enough employees. As a consequence, many staff representatives noted the importance of teamwork and clear staff communication.

Family support work may involve intense relationships with families; staff sometimes struggle with placing limits on the amount and kind of support they are able to provide. As noted in the earlier discussion of funding

issues, the instability of program funding, the increasing needs of many families, and the low wages associated with family support work can all impact negatively on staff morale.

Staff members also identified the need for ongoing staff training and professional development, and the challenges associated with providing such support. Continuing support appeared to be particularly important in cases when community members and program participants lacking formal qualifications were hired to work in programs. Common barriers to supporting staff development included a lack of funding for training, a lack of appropriate and accessible training opportunities and difficulties replacing staff who are absent due to participation in professional development activities.

To further explore staff training needs and barriers to training opportunities, in 1997 the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs conducted a national survey of staff working in family support settings, supplemented by focus groups. The findings indicated that while many staff were taking advantage of a wide array of training and professional development opportunities, many others experienced significant obstacles, particularly staff living in rural and isolated communities. The research also identified a need for more comprehensive training in family support, beyond the short workshops and events attended by most staff (MacAulay and Kellerman, 1998).

The demand for training and professional development opportunities beyond the occasional workshops and conferences sponsored by various program networks and associations led to the development of a Certificate Program in Family Supports, offered by Ryerson Polytechnic University. Begun in September 1996, this program was designed in collaboration with the Metro [Toronto] and Ontario Associations of Family Resource Programmes. Courses are available on-site in Toronto and through distance education and have attracted students from a number of provinces. A number of other universities and community colleges in various parts of the country have also begun to work with family resource practitioners to develop courses related to various aspects of family support.

## Men's Role and Participation in Programs

As noted in Chapter 3, women are instrumental in creating and sustaining a wide range of family support programs. In all of the case studies sites, women—as participants, staff and volunteers—vastly outnumbered men. However, many programs recognized the need to take specific steps to welcome and include fathers and men. These steps included hiring male staff to offer program components consciously designed to take men's needs into account. In some programs, support groups were developed specifically for men; father/child drop-in times and father/child meals were also offered, usually on weekends. Some programs encouraged male volunteers to work in programs and made special efforts to recruit men for positions on the Board of Directors. Programs with male staff or male volunteers reported that their presence had a direct impact on increasing the numbers of men who participated in their programs.

Among the study sites, *le Carrefour familial Hochelaga* had developed the strongest focus on meeting the needs of men and fathers. Their work in this area developed over a number of years, partly in response to the high levels of unemployment among men in their inner-city community. Staff of *le Carrefour* have made a conscious effort to welcome men and to recognize and validate their role within families, often in cases where fathers are unable to fulfill their traditional role as providers. Staff work with both mothers and fathers to affirm the

importance of the father's role in his child's life. Since many of the fathers do not live with their children, this is particularly challenging. A program representative commented:

*The father often withdraws from the child's life in the process of separation, or when another mate enters the mother's life. We work with mothers to encourage them not to deprive the child of his or her rights in the couple's dispute. We believe that the family includes the father, even when he's absent. The father has a place in the child's life even if he has none in the mother's.*

Many programs are making efforts to involve fathers in their programs, but considerably more work needs to be done to provide support in ways that are meaningful to fathers and to foster fathers' relationships with their children.

## V. Lessons Learned: Program Philosophy and "Good" Practice

Throughout this report, reference has been made to various aspects of the theory, values and principles of family support. A number of innovative practices have also been described and discussed in relation to child care, employment support and community economic development. It therefore seems fitting in this final section of the analysis, and by way of a summary, that the last word should go to program representatives. This section of the report will bring together a number of the comments made by participants during the research process about the lessons they had learned and share some of the wisdom they had gained from their experience in developing programs and doing family support work. Program representatives stressed the importance of developing a program philosophy and clear statement of values. They also made a number of comments about how services should be provided and about the ways in which people and programs should work together. Their comments eloquently echo and reinforce much of what has been reported.

***"Good" family support practice involves:***

1. *Adopting a conscious statement of values and program philosophy* - To ensure quality and accountability, programs need to define what they stand for, and to consider how they will work with people. Clear mission and value statements are also important when working in partnership with other groups. Program representatives commented:

*You need a mission and philosophy to help anchor you. It's important to stay true to your mission and values.*

*It helps to have goals and objectives for the organization as a whole and for each program component. This is especially important when working in partnership with other organizations; they need to know up front how we do things here.*

*We have to hold firm to our values and philosophy—why we're here, what we want to do; this will see us through practically anything.*

*Our values include sincerity, honesty, being non-judgmental, reinforcing that families are capable, acting as a provider of information and a facilitator, being a good listener, having trust and respect.*

*Stay true to the community's vision.*

2. *Adopting a holistic approach* that considers children's and families' needs in the context of their communities. Program representatives commented:

*In serving families, take a holistic view. Recognize the inter-relationships between various aspects of their lives.*

*It's important to address the needs of the whole family—fathers, youth, other extended family members, as well as women and kids.*

*We believe in an integrated approach—everything together makes a difference.*

*We must not only concentrate on the individual, but also on the community.*

3. *Providing for basic needs* - Without adequate food, clothing, shelter and employment, families cannot take advantage of more abstract supports and educational opportunities. Program representatives commented:

*People's basic needs must be met first—for food, shelter, safety and protection from family violence. Then [offer] support to deal with stress, a lack of self-esteem and negative past experiences.*

*Families have struggles with basic needs—housing, employment, food, child care. If families' basic needs are unmet, it may be difficult for them to participate in programs and to take part in community development processes.*

*Poverty is a vicious cycle. With the cutbacks, it's hard to work out family problems when basic needs, such as food, are not being dealt with.*

*Snacks for kids are important. It gives them energy; their thinking is clearer and they are more able to participate and make decisions.*

*We have phone and laundry facilities available; this helps to bring people in.*

*We provide transit tickets on an emergency basis to help people get to appointments and other essential places.*

4. *Being attentive to, and respecting diversity* in relation to culture, gender, family composition, disabilities and age. Program representatives work to facilitate tolerance, inclusivity and integration:

*We need to accommodate diversity and differences of all kinds. We must be sensitive to gender, culture, and disabilities. We also need to be sensitive to intergenerational differences and differences in approaches to family life—there's not one "ideal" type of family.*

*Programs and services must show respect for diversity, be non-punitive, honest, notice strengths, be caring and welcoming.*

*Appreciate differences and don't judge.*

*When you're developing services, you have to understand families' backgrounds, especially when they're newcomers to Canada. Respect participants' first culture. Recognize that everyone has a culture.*

*It's important to have a clear understanding of what multiculturalism is: to begin by learning about yourself and thinking about your own values, as well as learning about others.*

*It helps families to feel safe and comfortable to have multicultural, skilled staff available who are able to work in many languages and to provide interpretation, if necessary.*

5. *Nurturing families and children* - It is important to demonstrate that people matter and to create a caring, safe place for them to come. Program representatives commented:

*We try to break parents' isolation by offering them a place where they can form connections, learn to trust each other and begin to take an active role in neighbourhood life.*

*In working with families and children, we focus on praising, building on strengths, being a model, focusing on the positive and on giving unconditional acceptance.*

*It's important to nurture families, to use active and receptive listening, to "read" parents' behaviour, validate their feelings and to model how to deal with frustration.*

*I've learned that each person has some potential of which they're not aware. When you trust the person and give them a lot of support, they reach the point where they trust themselves and use their talents to serve the community, but this is a long process—it can take years.*

*I've seen a lot of generosity, people from the neighbourhood taking responsibility for various things.*

*It's important to have compassion, to be at the other person's side.*

6. *Strengthening family bonds* by offering education, support and counselling and by creating opportunities for family members to relax and enjoy each other's company:

*Create an environment that is conducive to "bonding" where parents can spend time with their children and learn to enjoy them. Include activities such as singing, reading and eating together. It's important for parents to discover the joy of having a child.*

7. *Promoting reciprocity and mutuality* - Program representatives commented on the importance of building on participants' and community strengths, fostering mutual support and reciprocity, and helping people to understand their interdependence.

*We're a community-building agency. People build relationships and connect with people here. Our organization works to create the social fabric, networks of friendship and solidarity.*

*One of the biggest problems people encounter is isolation. They often have no family or social networks. Here, they discover the idea of being together. They learn to form links, to create a social fabric, to reestablish family relationships. That's community empowerment.*

### **Approaches to Working with People**

*Program representatives stressed the importance of:*

- *having a sense of humour*
- *being flexible*
- *being creative*
- *being sincere and honest*
- *being client-centred and respecting where people are coming from—their pace of growth, their progress and their limits*
- *being non-judgmental, showing unconditional acceptance*
- *being unbiased, appreciating differences and respecting diversity*
- *being relaxed, informal*
- *being available, accessible*
- *being non-threatening*
- *doing "with" and not "for" people*
- *taking the time to develop trust*
- *modeling positive behaviour*
- *listening actively*
- *being able to facilitate and enable others*
- *building on people's strengths and reinforcing that families are capable*
- *believing in participants' potential to act and to be resourceful*

*Poverty usually has negative connotations, but we use poverty as a strength: within poverty people learn to survive. We don't play on the excuse of poverty; we build from it.*

*When we bring people together who are in the same situation, they experience sharing and camaraderie. They become involved with one another and provide mutual aid even outside the program.*

*Expect that participants can give something back.*

*It's important for the kids to learn to give back to the community.*

*Parents learn a lot from each other [in the Nobody's Perfect groups]. They feel they've got something to contribute.*

8. *Offering responsive, flexible, accessible programs* - It is important to develop programs in response to *real* needs, not based on “cookie cutter” approaches. This involves respecting the community development process and creating genuine opportunities for consultation, participant involvement and community ownership. It also means taking the time to let people and programs evolve “naturally”, and on their own terms. Program representatives commented:

*Listen to the needs of parents; don't assume you know what's needed.*

*Community members should be involved in program development right from the start, through home visits and planning meetings. This process is political education and creates community ownership.*

*Don't start with defined ideas about how programs should look; don't implement traditional definitions of services.*

*The more ideas come from participants, the more likely they are to be successful. Listen to community feedback.*

*Create formal and informal ways of getting input; make use of advisory committees.*

Flexible programming means that programs try to accommodate people's needs by modifying services, rather than expecting families to fit into pre-determined schedules and activities. Programs become accessible by working from a number of locations, using outreach and home visiting approaches, and by providing transportation:

*Be flexible about program content, hours and location of services and activities.*

*It's important to be client-directed, in both the pace and content of services, and to be flexible. The more choice that's offered, the more successful the work.*

*To be truly accessible, programs need to be accessible from the participants' point of view.*

*Make it possible for program participants to access the program “where they are at.” Minimize rules, don't add to parents' stress.*

*We need to be flexible and to provide a variety of activities and opportunities to be successful. We need a holistic approach.*

*We need to be user-friendly and accessible. It's important to offer informal activities and to have fun as well as being serious.*

*Programs should be flexible and community-based, responding to community needs. They should offer a service framework, not be rigidly structured.*

Programs are not targeted but accessible to the whole community:

*Prevention can't be targeted. Targeting limits who can benefit and who can help. It undermines the ability to provide peer support.*

*Targeting, labeling people as high-risk, "special interest" groups, is very destructive.*

*We don't support targeting. We need diverse groups in family resource programs for interdependence to work; families can be a resource for each other.*

*We don't keep files on participants and there are no criteria for admission or selection.*

9. *Being concerned with the quality of services offered* - Program representatives noted that it is important to monitor the quality of service and to develop new approaches when things are not working. Mechanisms can involve community feedback forums, regular program evaluation and taking part in research:

*Quality control is essential to maintain high standards in the delivery of programs.*

*It's important to stay in touch with parents and caregivers by talking with them and using community advisory forums.*

*It's important to do ongoing planning and to reassess methods and approaches in order to respond to changing community conditions and priorities.*

10. *Having stable programs, committed staff* - Program representatives commented on the importance of building trust at all levels—with participants, among staff (in order to work holistically), with other service providers and with funders and evaluators:

*It takes a long time to build trust, to build a relationship with clients; it's hard to do much for a family without this.*

*Stability is important in order to sustain relationships with the community.*

*Consistent funding is vital; staff turnover breaks the trust of participants.*

*It's important to gain trust; this has involved sharing some personal history. I found people would not come to organized programs until relationships were established.*

*Attachment is important; staff stability is crucial. It takes time to build trust. Change throws people off (e.g., a maternity leave of staff member).*

11. *Being politically aware* - It is important to advocate with and on behalf of individuals, families and communities. It is also important hold firm to one's values and not be intimidated or threatened by the potential loss of funding. Program representatives commented:

*We try to be aware of the political climate and shifts in the climate, and to mold political priorities to the needs of the organization and not to be defined or directed by them.*

*Collective action on the part of community organizations is necessary since problems go beyond single organizations, just as an individual's problems go beyond the individual.*

*We've learned not to agree to do more with less any longer, even at the price of cutting services, because inadequate resources make our volunteers and workers burn out. And by refusing, we're registering our objection to what is happening.*

*We've learned not to lose sight of our objectives; we must not be subservient to funders, we have to be sufficiently independent and alert.*

## **Concluding Remarks on Lessons Learned**

While there were some variations from program to program in the comments that representatives made about the lessons they had learned, the similarities among their remarks were striking. People who worked in very different communities across Canada shared similar stories and common principles. Considering that many program representatives have had few, or in some cases no opportunities to meet with family resource practitioners in regions other than their own, there was a notable degree of consensus. Their comments indicate a firm grounding in the practice of family support and reflect the wisdom they have gained through many years of commitment and experience.