

A.8 Outline of Services and Programs for the Grey Bruce Children's Alliance

Grey Bruce Children's Alliance

In Bruce and Grey Counties we have a long history of working collaboratively to provide integrated services for children and families. Programs funded by three Ministries (Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care) have resulted from these cooperative efforts. High levels of collaboration among agencies have resulted in numerous programs and services being jointly delivered across the district to better meet the needs of our large rural area that includes three First Nations communities.

Many of these initiatives were born out of necessity since no one agency had the funding or the mandate to provide the comprehensive service that children and families required. A shared belief in the need to ensure the best use of our limited resources has spurred us on in our efforts to avoid any duplication and/or overlap of programs. Finally, we recognized that every agency had its strengths and that if we built upon each other's strengths we would create enhanced programs and services for children.

Our new Alliance builds on earlier ongoing collaborative efforts and an ongoing commitment to explore how we can best achieve comprehensive planning for the children and youth in our community.

The following provides an overview of several of the success stories that we have achieved so far.

The Ontario Early Years Centre Bruce Grey Owen Sound (OEYC) - a Unique Rural Model

In Bruce and Grey Counties, Ontario Early Years Centre services are delivered through a unique rural model. Local planners representing health, education, social services and parents developed a model that incorporated provincial requirements while responding to the needs and realities of families in our large rural community. Rather than develop a single site with limited outreach capacity, the Bruce Grey network includes two main sites, 12 satellites and about 30 outreach locations. As a result, most families in Bruce and Grey can access Ontario Early Years Centre services within a 15-minute drive. The model creates an accessible, safe, welcoming, local environment for families where they can belong, and connect to other programs and services.

"Let's Learn Clinics" - Collaborative School Entry Planning and Programming

This partnership involves the two coterminous District School Boards, Grey Bruce Health Unit, Community Living Associations, Early Years Centres, Social Services from both Bruce and Grey Counties and numerous other local agencies and support services. The project provides for an extensive pre-school screening process in conjunction with early registration for Junior and Senior Kindergarten. Professionals such as a speech language pathologist, a pre-school resource teacher, a public health nurse and OEYC and child care centre staff are available at the clinics to answer questions and conduct pre-school assessments. In addition, school staff are also present to share information. These clinics are now offered throughout both school boards. Evaluation data that have been gathered indicate that parents, school staff and community agency representatives are extremely pleased with the outcomes of this project. Some of the positive outcomes that have been identified include: enhanced school readiness, earlier and more intensive intervention and the development of far more reliable statistics about the type and number of pre-school services that are required for children and families.

School-Age Speech and Language Support

This initiative involves the two coterminous District School Boards and the Community Care Access Centre. This project is a method of providing speech and language services which focuses on providing school staff and their students with a full range of service options delivered by the same speech language pathologist. Students are served by the speech language pathologist responsible for a geographically defined group of schools regardless of their Ministry association, employing organization and/or the assessed difficulty. The benefits of this partnership have been recognized by all involved including: students, parents, school staff and speech language pathologists.

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Support

This partnership involves the two coterminous District School Boards, Bruce Grey Children's Services and the Counties of Bruce and Grey. Seven teams have been created to serve children with severe emotional and behavioural challenges. The teams comprise a social worker, child and youth worker and a behaviour lead teacher. The social workers in the public system and all of the child and youth workers are funded by the children's mental health sector while the teachers are funded by Education. Additional funding is provided through grants from the municipalities. The model has proved so successful that we have been able to adapt it to meet the needs of expelled pupils within their home communities. This is especially important given the rural nature of our area and the vast geography that we cover. The program is in its fifth year of operation and has proved to be an extremely important component of our school and children's mental health service delivery continuum. We have been invited to share information about the program across the province with representatives from both school boards and children's services agencies.