

COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION PROGRAM

ANNUAL EDUCATION REPORT

2007-2008 SCHOOL YEAR

COMMUNITY OPTIONS - A SOCIETY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Program Profile

Community Preschool Education provided educational and therapeutic programs to 77 children in their community programs. The staff complement to enable these programs to take place is as follows:

5.3 Teachers	0.5 Speech Aide
3.15 Occupational Therapists	3.75 Speech Language Pathologists
1.5 In-Home Specialists	0.2 Physical Therapists
1 Secretary	1.0 Program Manager
0.12 Administrative Assistant	0.4 Administration/Intake
44 Educational Assistants (Hired as Community Options employees)	

As Community Preschool Education is one of several programs of Community Options, the support, guidance, and direction from the Executive Director and the Board of Directors is also very much a part of the Community Preschool Education program profile.

Program Statistics

A total of 77 children received services from the Community Preschool Education program; most of the children were with the program for the entire ten months while others left, allowing us to serve new children.

The educational programs occurred in various locations throughout the Edmonton area. These included: 2 Family Dayhomes, 19 playschools, 29 Child Care programs, and 12 different kindergarten programs. The kindergarten programs took place in Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton Catholic Schools, Elk Island Public Schools and Edmonton Private Operator programs.

All administrative and Alberta Education deadlines were met for the 2007-2008 academic year. Visiting Student Agreements are in place for both Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic Schools. This Agreement outlines responsibilities and service delivery parameters.

Program Updates

CPE and Community Options were saddened by the loss of Lois Bredo, Speech Language Pathologist, in September 2007. She was a dedicated employee of CPE for 13 years and her commitment to the children and families with whom she worked and to her co-workers and friends here at Community Options will be remembered and treasured always.

We welcomed a new Teacher, Donna Sledz, a new Speech Language Pathologist, Linda McFetridge and a new Occupational Therapist, Venita Malhotra. Also, Grace D'Ambrosio, who has worked for Community Options for many years in various programs, was hired as our Speech Therapist Assistant and more recently, as Administrative Assistant to the Program Manager.

Angelica Alarcon, Speech Therapist Assistant and Shelly Craig, Occupational Therapist, had healthy boys this last year. Angelica will not be returning to Community Options as she has moved out of the province.

Program Challenges

For the third consecutive year we had difficulty recruiting and retaining Educational Assistants. To further complicate this process, we were informed by Alberta Education at the conclusion of the last school year, that we could no longer pay Child Cares costs directly for Ratio Enhancement Staff. This was due to the fact that Ratio Enhancement Staff in place for an educational program could not be included in the Turn-Around Document for Children's Services. We had to cover the cost of not only the regular wage, but the wage enhancement, which increased our costs by approximately \$30,000.00 last year. As a result, we now have to recruit Educational Assistants for Child Cares as well as Preschools and Kindergartens, posing an increase challenge for the teachers. We were able to increase the Educational Assistants' wages to be more on par with those of the school boards. However, we are still at a disadvantage, as we are unable to offer benefits. We still continue to lose Educational Assistants mid-year leaving us at disadvantage for programming. This is an ongoing source of frustration and concern for staff and parents as there is frequently a small gap in service before hiring occurs.

CPE Program Management this year has been shared by Mary Redwood-Jones and Heidi Reader. This has evolved in order to assure executive succession in a timely and seamless manner.

All administrative and Alberta Education deadlines were met for the 2007-2008 academic year.

Providing the educational program in kindergarten classrooms within the Edmonton Public system continues to be a positive and mutually rewarding experience. The Visiting Student Agreement is in place and proves to be very effective for staff in both venues. Jan Small-McGinley is the Transition Coordinator for our program, visiting when required and assisting greatly in the smooth transition from kindergarten to grade one. Our staff and parents are very appreciative of her guidance and expertise.

Program Highlights

For the past several years, Edmonton Catholic Schools have been self-contained and as a result, we have been unable to provide P.U.F. supports to children attending their Kindergarten programs. This year, we were able to work in one Edmonton Catholic Schools Kindergarten program.

We continue to receive positive feedback from preschools, daycares, and kindergartens. Program staff appreciated the expertise, knowledge, support and resources provided to their programs by our staff, especially in the areas of inclusion, developmentally appropriate educational goals, and support around speech and language and occupational therapy. The consensus was that their programs were enriched by receiving assistance from Community Options personnel.

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This year, instead of holding Parent Orientation Workshops for new families, we held an Open House on May 20, 2007 and invited new families as well as the Health Units and Hospitals.

We provided a series of workshops, supported by AISI (Alberta Initiative for School Improvement) funding, for families, employees and other parties working with our program. This year, we held some workshops at various Edmonton Public Libraries throughout the city. This has been a positive step, as these locations are more accessible for people who do not have their own transportation. Workshop topics included presentations on behaviour basics, visual strategies, the Educational Assistant's role in the classroom, sensory integration, fine motor skills, preschool skills and strategies to enhance speech and language.

This is the second year of our three-year AISI-funded project cycle and we continue to partner with GRIT.

Trends

This year, again, there has been a small increase in kindergarten children being supported by our program as well as an increase in the number of school boards. We are hopeful that this is a new beginning in moving towards giving more families the freedom to choose alternate programs for their children.

Due to the direction by Alberta Education regarding staffing in daycares, finding and retaining Educational Assistants will continue to be a challenge for this program. However, this is the first year that we had adequate therapy levels which allowed for excellent service provision without having to contract therapy staff from the private roster.

Prepared by:

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