



Hamilton

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Early Years Community Plan Update: 2022 in Review March 2023

Since the launch of Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan in 2016, our local early years community has faced many changes that have shifted how we operationalize and work together. From the impacts of a global pandemic to the introduction of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care funding program, and increased recognition of the importance of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging within our work, the changes have been numerous.

Despite these changes, the early years system remains resilient in its ability to innovate and respond to change and successfully meet the needs of the children and families we serve. As we continue to adjust to a changing landscape in 2023 and beyond, it is important to look back and highlight the breadth of work completed through the Early Years Organizing Structure in 2022, and share activities planned for 2023 relevant to our community.

2022 Highlights

Ongoing progress continues to be made toward achieving the goals set out in Hamilton's Early Years Community Plan (EYCP). We value our highly committed early years community and engaged members involved with the EYCP Organizing Structure for upholding the vision of our local plan and investing time to advance its strategic priorities.

Equity and Engagement Advisory Group (EEAG)

EEAG focused its efforts to develop a system-wide approach to strengthen equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging for all families and caregivers across Hamilton's early years system. Last year, several foundational activities were completed:

- The action planning framework was developed to guide activities being undertaken across the early years system by ensuring the needs and perspectives of diverse children and families are continually considered. The following are priorities that have been identified from the action planning framework:
 - Implementing the Early Years Equity and Engagement Survey to understand the composition of the early years system workforce
 - Prioritizing equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging learning for staff and system leaders
 - Updating the Hamilton Early Years Quality Program System Priority Template with an increased focus on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Hiring a Human Services Equity Specialist in September 2022 to advance and support work related to equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging across the Children's and Community Services Division.

EarlyON Operations Committee

The EarlyON Operations Committee continued to meet monthly to ensure that our local EarlyON system met Ontario's Ministry of Education requirements to support children, parents and caregivers in learning, growing and connecting together. In addition to ensuring the safe reopening and resuming of EarlyON programs in 2022, the following was achieved:

- The launch of KEyON, a digital registration and attendance system in May 2022 to improve program access for families using EarlyON Child and Family Centres. This also enhanced service reporting efficiency among operators of these facilities.
- The development and re-initiation of community partnerships, including a pilot program to support access to specialized early development and speech and language services within EarlyON Centres, to support the unique needs of families and children that use these spaces.

Early Years HR Workforce Committee

The Early Years HR Workforce Committee received one-time funding to advance work across four identified priority areas: sustaining the workforce, growing the workforce, attracting diversity to the workforce and enhancing opportunities for professional development. Over the past year, the following activities occurred:

- Provided a grant to 82 Mohawk College ECE students in their final placement to assist with onboarding, co-learning and mentorship opportunities.
- Provided free child care to 227 ECEs and individuals working directly with children across Hamilton.
- Partnered with the Immigrants Working Centre to support an early years system introductory course for 13 Early Childhood Education (ECE) students
- Initiated a "Thank an ECE" campaign in October 2022 alongside the province-wide Early Childhood Worker Appreciation Day.
- Funded two professional learning days in 2022 to support ECE staff in continuous learning opportunities during their work hours.
- Launched an ECE marketing campaign to educate the public on the important role ECEs play in our community.
- Supported an ECE Career Fair at Mohawk College for graduating students.
- Provided free professional development opportunities, including an annual ASCY membership.

Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) Advisory

The CMSM Advisory table continued to meet monthly in 2022 to identify gaps and provide advice to the City as the Service System Manager for the early years system. The committee has broad representation across the province and was instrumental in their input on:

- Implementing phase one of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system
- Providing an onboarding grant for Mohawk College ECE students
- A workforce grant for ECE and individuals working directly with children
- Strategies to address the health and well-being of the workforce
- Equity, diversity and inclusion activities for the early years system

Infant and Early Years Mental Health Committee (IEYMH)

The IEYMH Committee continued to develop systems capacity and coordination to support families of children with identified needs or concerns about their development. Through the efforts of its members and multiple workgroups, the committee was pleased to action the following in 2022:

- On May 3, 2022, hosted “*Continuing the Conversation*” at the Infant and Early Years Mental Health Institute for interested staff working in the early years community.
- In December 2022, launched the *0 – 3.8 Years Care Pathway* to help streamline the referral process for families and facilitate their access to the right level of service, based on need.
- Developed a variety of [promotional materials](#), available through Hamilton Public Health Services, as well as [an Infant and Early Years Mental Health System Support webpage](#) for early years staff and other professionals to enhance their ability to refer families to the pathway and related services.

Quality Operational Committee

The Quality Operational Committee focused on reviewing and re-initiating work that had been paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee has broad representation from across the early years system and 2022 focused on the following priorities:

- Creative ways to fit pedagogical documentation into practice
- Fostering cultures of learning
- Family engagement with pedagogical documentation
- Pedagogical documentation in different environments (e.g., outdoor classrooms)
- Launching ‘Side by Side’ mentoring program

Hamilton Early Years Research and Evaluation Network (HEYREN)

HEYREN events remained on hold in 2022 while continued work to maintain and build research partnerships remained a focus throughout the year, resulting in the following:

- Supporting seven new and three ongoing research project partnerships.
 - Research focused on relevant early years community topics, including the impact of COVID-19 on children and families, gender rights, mental health and service system experiences among diverse families, Indigenous fathers, parenting and child development.
- Knowledge sharing with the early years community about research and evaluation outcomes through infographics and webinars, including results from the Ontario Parent Survey 2 Hamilton, HR Workforce Strategy, and the Early Development Instrument 2018.

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) Operational Committee

This committee continued to meet regularly in 2022 to build capacity and support inclusion in the early years system. Over the past year, the following occurred:

- The committee initiated a pilot to extend SNR services and resources into EarlyON Child and Family Centres.
- Developed contact information posters for the early years system so supervisors and educators continue to have awareness of who to contact for particular SNR services and supports.
 - This poster will also strengthen collaboration amongst all SNR service providers. A distribution plan is currently being finalized.
- To strengthen inclusion, committee membership was extended to include our Francophone, Indigenous, EarlyON and Licensed Home Child Care partners.
- SNR partners presented and shared information about Hamilton with Mohawk College ECE students.

Looking Ahead: What's Next for the Early Years Community Plan

To ensure Hamilton's EYCP remains robust, responsive to local needs, and relevant to our local early years community and its system partners, planning is underway to host a community information session on April 25th and 26th, 2023 to review its current structure, validate its goals and priorities as well as identify changes and areas of need in the future.

Additional information regarding this consultation will be shared with partners in the coming weeks. Based on the results of this consultation, the EYCP will be updated and shared back with the early years community via written communications and community sessions.

Thank You!

A sincere and heartfelt thank you goes out to all staff, administrators and volunteers working across all of Hamilton's early years system and partner agencies for all of your work to date. Your perseverance and diligence in continuing to serve Hamilton's children and families throughout the pandemic to the present, combined with your continued support of and commitment to achieving the vision and goals of Hamilton's EYCP, contributes to the ongoing success of the plan and our system.