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Zhawenimi-Anokiitaagewin
Sault Ste. Marie District

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Ici Pour Aider.

District of Sault Ste. Marie
Social Services Administration Board
Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres

Executive Summary



September 2017

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Background and Objectives

In the past, the province funded four types of child and family programs including Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Child Care Resource Centres, and Better Beginnings Better Futures programs, which have provided beneficial programs and services to families for many years.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) released the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework* that outlined their vision that Ontario's children and families are well supported by an Early Years system that is high quality, seamless, and accessible. In February 2016 the Ministry announced its intention to transform Ministry-funded child and family programs into an increasingly integrated, cohesive system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 and their parents and caregivers known as Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). Beginning in 2018, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) will be responsible for the local management of OEYCFCs as part of their responsibility for the service system management of child care and other human services.

In January 2017, the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board (DSSMSSAB) retained consultant services to work with us to analyze, examine and develop an implementation plan for Early Years service delivery within the broader social services framework. The following existing programs will be included as part of this transfer: Ontario Early Years Centres, Best Start Hubs, Family Resource programs, and Parent and Family Literacy Centres.

Methodology

Data sources used to develop this report include: demographic data for the community as a whole; service utilization data for Best Start Hubs and Parent Family Literacy Centres; the 2015 Best Start Network Children's Report which includes a review of past and current EDI information; an extensive survey of 493 parents and caregivers conducted in January and February 2017; a questionnaire regarding core Early Years services and programs completed by Best Start Hub and Parent and Family Literacy Centre providers; and findings from two community consultations.

Demographics

The Sault Ste. Marie Census Agglomeration (CA) is a Statistics Canada defined area consisting of a number of neighboring municipalities situated around the urban core of Sault Ste. Marie. Since the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board (DSSMSSAB) covers an area larger than that of the urban core of Sault Ste. Marie, CA statistics have been included where possible. The Sault Ste. Marie CA is made up of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, Prince Township, Rankin Location, Garden River, Macdonald, Meredith and Aberdeen Additional Township, and Laird Township. The DSSMSSAB territory covers the City of Sault Ste. Marie, Prince Township and a geographic area from the northern boundary

of Sault Ste. Marie to Montreal River. As the geographic areas used by Statistics Canada do not align with the DSSMSSAB boundaries, our ability to include Statistics Canada data for the area North of Sault Ste. Marie was limited.

The City of Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding areas that make up the Census Agglomeration had a population of 79,800 in 2011, an increase from 78,908 in 2001, but a slight decrease from 80,098 in 2006. Over the next five years, the population of this area is projected to grow by 0.2%. The majority of people in this area reside in the City of Sault Ste. Marie. The Sault Ste. Marie CA area has an aging population, most significantly in the 45 to 64 age groups. The population of Sault Ste. Marie is older than the population of Ontario. With regard to young children aged 0 to 6, the population increased by 2.7% from 2006 to 2016 and currently sits at 5,295.

Indigenous Population: In 2011, there were 8,065 Indigenous people living in the Sault Ste. Marie CA, making up approximately 10.1% of the total population. Generally speaking, the Indigenous population of the Sault Ste. Marie CA is younger than the non-Indigenous population. Also, the two age groups with the highest proportion of Indigenous people in the Sault Ste. Marie CA in 2011 were the 0-4 and 5-9 age groups.

Francophone Population: The Francophone population in the Sault Ste. Marie CA is approximately 2,640 persons, representing approximately 3.4% of the total population. Of this total, the lowest cohorts are the youngest age groups including those 0-4, 5-9 and 10-14 years old.

Child Wellbeing and School Readiness

Child well-being and school readiness in our catchment area are reviewed based on two measures: The Early Development Instrument (EDI) and the Social Risk Index (SRI). The EDI is a questionnaire that measures kindergarten aged child development and school readiness. "School readiness" refers to the child's ability to meet the task demands of school. Results of the EDI questionnaire are grouped into five domains of child development: Physical Health & Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language & Cognitive Development, and Communication Skills & General Knowledge.

The SRI is a measure of socioeconomic risk in communities and neighbourhoods and is derived from 2006 Census data from Statistics Canada. SRI scores are based on nine different indicators and range from 0-9, where 0 indicates the lowest degree of socioeconomic risk and a score of 9 indicates the highest degree of socioeconomic risk. The nine indicators include lone-parent families, low income, knowledge of an official language, immigration, tenancy, residential mobility, unemployment, education, and government income transfers.

In 2014/15, children entering senior kindergarten in Sault Ste. Marie had an EDI vulnerability rate of 31.3% and in the SSM North Unorganized area a rate of 41.3%, compared to the provincial baseline vulnerability rate of 28%. The neighbourhoods with the highest vulnerabilities were: West Central SSM

(all five domains); East Central SSM (four domains) and West SSM (two domains). There were 465 children under the age of 6 living in High Risk Dissemination Areas (DA) in 2016, and 37.7% of children under 6 lived in either a High or Somewhat High Risk DA, with some definite overlap occurring between those who are the most vulnerable and those living in areas that are high or somewhat high risk DAs (neighbourhoods). In addition, nearly half of children under the age of six live in either a high or somewhat high risk DA.

Early Years Programs and Services

There is a wide range of Early Years programs and services in our catchment area. This report focuses on Best Start Hubs, Parent and Family Literacy Centres, and Social Services Community Hub sites in social housing, all of which are directly impacted by the OEYCFC policy initiative. Currently, Best Start Hubs and outreach sites are operated by Child Care Algoma in the city of Sault Ste. Marie, and by Prince Township in the Township of Prince and in the unorganized area north of the city of Sault Ste. Marie. Parent and Family Literacy Centres are operated by the Algoma District School Board at four schools in the city. Social Services currently supports four outreach Community Hub sites located in social housing locations.

Service and Staffing Requirements

Provincial OEYCFC guidelines specify that certain mandatory core services must align with the principles and objectives for OEYCFCs, and each program must have at least one Registered Early Childhood Educator on site.

The Ministry also recognizes the importance of integrating OEYCFCs within the broader context of local community services, for example child care, public health, employment and training programs, recreation programs, public libraries and specialized services, as part of integrated local service planning. Services must also be inclusive, that is to say, accessible and responsive to varying abilities, cultures, languages, socioeconomic levels, sexual orientations and religions. Based on provincial guidelines and directives, we have developed specific guidelines and selection criteria for OEYCFC service providers in our area.

Key Findings from Environmental Scan

Based on information about Early Years services and service utilization, including service utilization by social risk factors and survey data from parents and caregivers, the key findings of the environmental scan are:

- The higher risk population in our area is under-represented in terms of using Early Years services at Best Start Hubs and Parent and Family Literacy Centres.
- More information about early years programs and services needs to be available to the public.

- There is a need for supportive outreach, especially for high and somewhat high risk families.
- Hours and days of operation need to be extended, especially during evenings and weekends, to make programs and services more accessible to families.
- Service proximity needs to be improved by providing programming closer to where people live.
- There is a need to provide more/healthier food and snacks and/or to advertise the availability of food and snacks. This emerged as a more minor theme but it could encourage more people to attend Early Years programming.

OEYCFC Plan

The key findings from the environmental scan were presented at two community consultations in April and July, 2017. Participants reflected on the findings and provided recommendations. At the second consultation, we also mapped out where we thought OEYCFC sites should be located to meet identified needs, and participants provided valuable feedback. The OEYCFC Plan for our area is based on all of the data from the environmental scan as well as the feedback from community stakeholders.

1. Selected Service Providers

Services will be provided through purchase of service agreements with selected service providers. The selected service providers for OEYCFCs are: *Child Care Algoma, Prince Township* (both operating Best Start Hub sites), and the *Algoma District School Board* (currently operating Parent and Family Literacy Centres). All three organizations have been briefed on and have accepted our terms and conditions, including the need to adhere to OEYCFC guiding principles and the selection criteria. Final commitments are pending site confirmations and funding allocations.

In addition, included in our plan is an OEYCFC to be located at Algoma District School Board's Etienne Brulé Community Hub site. This proposed location and project is included in our *Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples* off reserve Early Years program proposal. The potential Service Provider is the Indigenous Friendship Centre, once again pending available supports and funding allocations.

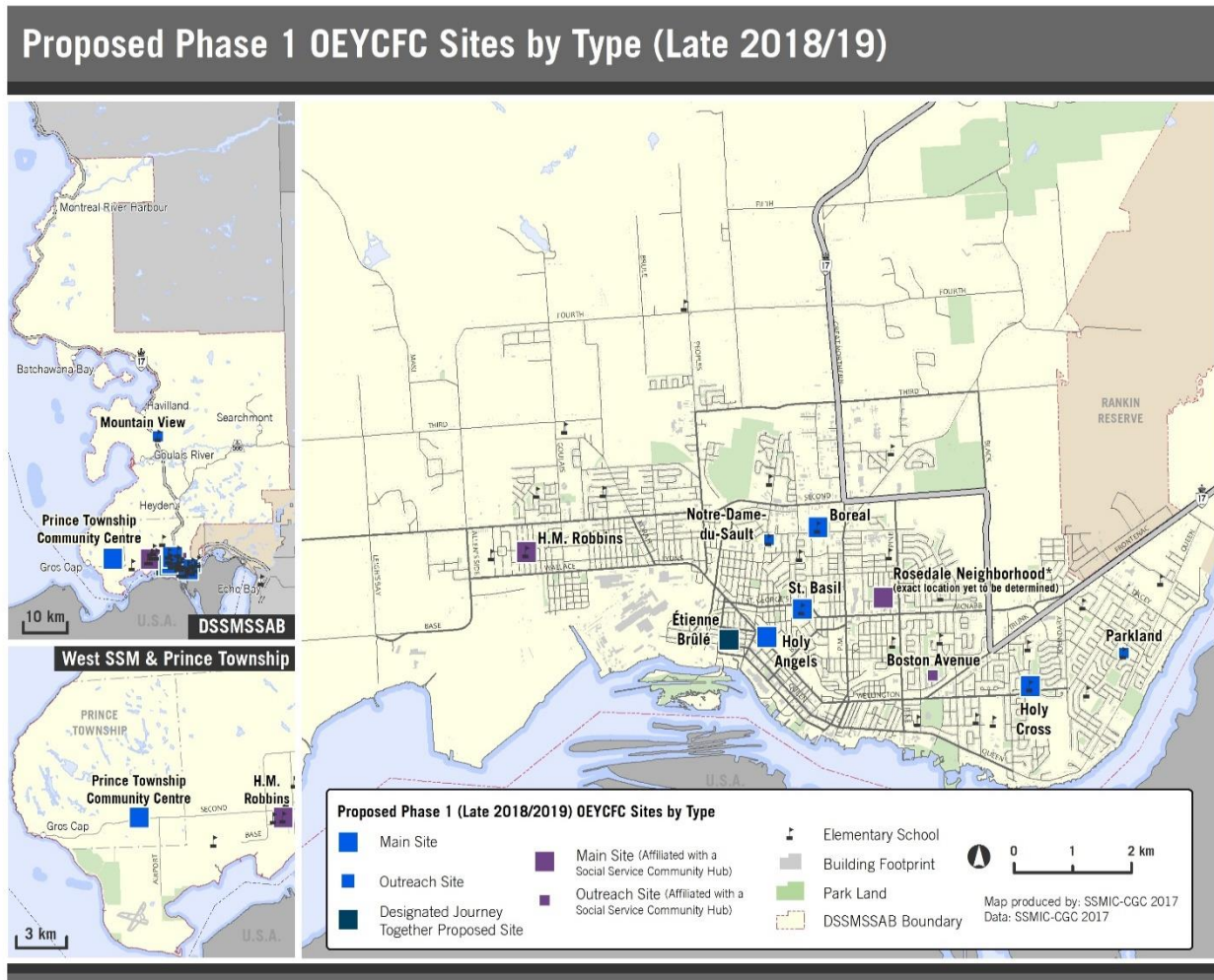
2. Mandatory Core Services

The selected service providers will provide all mandatory OEYCFC core services in adherence with OEYCFC guidelines and as per our purchase of service agreements.

3. Proposed Site Locations

The proposed site locations, which will be finalized following a transitional year, are shown below. We are referring to this 2018/2019 time period as Phase 1. Phase 2 will consist of a review of established Phase 1 service locations to ensure they are performing optimally. Phase 1 sites were selected based on demographic data, population risk levels and the need to reach out to marginalized populations, and feedback from survey respondents and community consultations.

Proposed Phase 1 OEYCFC Sites



4. Proposed Hours of Operation

Proposed hours of service will be extended to include more programming at main and outreach sites, including in the evenings and on weekends, and more programming with food available. There will be

increased hours of service available in the winter, based on recommendations from community consultations.

5. Building Capacity to Deliver High Quality Early Years Programs and Services

To ensure quality services that align with the pedagogical approaches described in *How Does Learning Happen: Ontario's Pedagogy for Early Years?*, we have developed OEYCFC Guiding Principles and Criteria for Selection, which will be key components of purchase of service agreement signed by OEYCFC service providers. One of the criterion is that each organization must actively participate in our Early Years Quality Assurance Program/Framework, including identified Early Years planning processes, and participate in all professional development activities offered. In addition organizations will provide key data elements to us in a timely manner and in the identified format to assist with planning and provide consistency in programming. To meet staffing requirements, staff who do not have an RECE credential will be asked to participate in identified courses.

6. Marketing and Communications

The Ministry is developing an integrated marketing campaign to help increase awareness of the child care and Early Years programs available to parents and caregivers. In conjunction with the provincial campaign, we will be developing a consistent and highly visible early years marketing and communications strategy as part of the work of our Early Years Service System Table. We will embed information about OEYCFC programs and services, including information about child development, parenting supports and play and inquiry-based learning, into our existing community phone-based and web-based information services.

7. Service System Planning and Data Analysis

Through contracted services with the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, we have access to high quality data gathering and analysis which will assist with service system planning. In addition, we have a strong, collaborative Early Years Community Planning Table (formerly the Best Start Network), which will be reviewing relevant data and assisting us with ongoing planning. Finally, we have a comprehensive Quality Assurance Program in place. All of these resources will be used to ensure that early years services are responsive to the needs of children and their families, that local Early Years programs and services are reflective of relevant, current research and evidence; that we are mobilizing local knowledge and data in planning; that we are raising awareness; and that we are sharing information and research, and making evidence informed decisions.

We will also regularly engage in discussions to collect insight from community partners, parents and caregivers to inform local programs and services and satisfaction surveys will be regularly utilized at OEYCFC locations and Social Services offices.

8. Coordination and Collaboration

During community consultations, we heard a strong commitment to maintaining and building on our existing partnerships, including the provision of a range of programming at early years sites. Areas where we plan to put more focus on moving forward will include:

- partnering with the private sector;
- increasing the number of partner agencies who attend OEYCFC sites to talk about their services, mingle with parents, and provide an active offer of services at the OEYCFC sites;
- working with the College to maximize potential support and opportunities for student ECEs., e.g. having students interning at the OEYCFCs, having students provide childcare in the afternoons so that providers could do programming for parents; and
- using the Integrated Services Committee of the Early Years Community Planning Table to assist in the development of an more inclusive partnership plan.

9. Supportive Outreach

As part of our outreach work, OEYCFC staff will be tasked with making connections with families and other service providers throughout the community. Additionally, we are planning a mobile service during Phase 1 of implementation. Community partners are very enthusiastic about providing collaborative programming using this approach. This initiative will provide services where people live or congregate (for example, in malls), engage families in neighbourhoods that are less proximal to existing sites, facilitate family participation in programming, and provide staff with opportunities to encourage families to attend established sites.

10. Collaborative Planning with Diverse Populations

• Integrated Planning with the Indigenous Community

Our Early Years system plan was developed concurrently with *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples* early years planning. The OEYCFC planning was done in collaboration with the Indigenous community and with the consultants hired for the *Journey Together* planning process. Indigenous families were included in the initial Early Years survey and this data was utilized as part of the community consultations for off reserve planning. There is a strong commitment among non-Indigenous and Indigenous community stakeholders to work together to support Indigenous programming and we will use that process as a model moving forward. Work taking place at Sault College and Algoma University may contribute to our ability to expand Indigenous programming and we will be connecting with them to explore further.

Algoma District School Board operates the Urban Aboriginal High School at their Etienne Brule Community Hub. There is consensus that this is an ideal location for an Indigenous OEYCFC and the Indian Friendship Centre has expressed interest in providing this service there. A key component of the *Journey Together* plan includes provision of opportunities for ongoing mentoring and partnering between the Indigenous OEYCFC and the non-Indigenous Early Years system. In addition the plan includes a collaborative community project being undertaken called Homeward Bound, which is a multi-partnered program to break the cycle of poverty for Indigenous single mothers. Child care is a vital component and we hope to integrate OEYCFC services at this location once constructed.

- **French-language Services**

Although the Francophone population in the service area is small, the community is committed to retaining these services as currently configured. The Francophone population is spread across the whole community and further opportunity to provide French language outreach will be explored with families using the service. We will continue to offer and enhance the hours for Francophone programming at Carrefour Meilleur départ at École Notre-Dame-du-Sault School and ensure regular feedback to determine ongoing or new needs for the population.