



OUR CHILDREN, **THEIR FUTURE**

District of Sault Ste. Marie
Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma Child & Family Network 2020 Report,
Volume 4

Prepared by the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, Acorn

This report was created for the Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma Child and Family Network by Acorn Information Solutions (a division of the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre) with the help of the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board. The data in this report was compiled and the report was co-authored by Steve Zuppa, Zoe Alavi, Angela Robson, Karen Lehtonen, Jackie Lajoie, and Alex Boston with the help of community partners and the Child and Family Network. Edits were done by Carrie Jones from the DSSMSSAB.

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Thank you to our community parents and early learning programs for providing the photos in this report.

A digital version of this report can be found online at: <https://socialservices-ssmd.ca/early-years/early-years-resources/>. Follow the link under “Children’s Report”.

A report focusing on the Algoma District has also been released in tandem.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of those who made this report possible.

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Sault Ste. Marie Public Library
Soup Kitchen Community Centre
Statistics Canada
THRIVE Child Development Centre
United Way of Sault Ste. Marie & District
Vincent Place Food Services

A Message from The Child & Family Network

Communities Growing, Children Thriving

Carla Fairbrother
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Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma
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From 2011, the Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District Best Start Networks have strategically operated in partnership to achieve a single Best Start mission and vision. Since the previous edition of this report (2015), the Networks have developed into a single Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma Child and Family Network and will be embarking on a new strategic planning process in 2019.

We want to ensure that across the whole of Algoma, “children and families have easy access to consistent, quality services that are welcoming, integrated and responsive.” A single network enables us to maximize collaboration for the benefit of all children and families in our geographic areas. We recognize that true system integration is an ongoing process whereby service providers and stakeholders engage in progressively greater degrees of joint service activity.

The Network’s Vision is that all children born and growing up in the District of Sault Ste. Marie and the District of Algoma will achieve their social, intellectual, economic, physical and emotional potential through the provision of integrated children’s services. In recent years, the Network has been instrumental in the community planning of integrated children’s services. Our table is comprised of representatives from many local children’s service sector organizations and we regularly consult with community partners and parents across the area.

This is the fourth edition of a report that provides community information on some key areas that have a significant impact on how well our children are developing: family structure, childcare, health, education, family support services and our physical environment. By measuring these indicators in our community, we are given an opportunity to identify and plan for the development or enhancement of services that support improved outcomes for our children.

Our communities have much to celebrate with regard to successful relationship building and decreased fragmentation in service delivery between children’s service providers, as well as partnering that supports seamless access for parents. The Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma Child and Family Network remains committed to the development of an integrated service system that improves the lives of our children, our families and our communities.

We look forward to the future knowing that our Network partners continue to demonstrate the passion and determination to achieve our Vision.

“

...the Network has been instrumental in the community planning of integrated children’s services.”



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Executive Summary

This report, commissioned by the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board to assist in community planning, outlines and measures the services supporting children and families in Sault Ste. Marie, with a focus on children aged 0 to 6. It includes a collection of indicators that impact child development and our children's ability to reach their full potential. By examining information across neighbourhoods in Sault Ste. Marie, we can determine where more attention is needed in terms of accessing services and programs. It is important to find out where children shine in Sault Ste. Marie, as well as where they may need more attention.

The Community Overview examines the population and age breakdown of Sault Ste. Marie, as well as Indigenous and Francophone profiles. This demographic information gives us a better understanding of Sault Ste. Marie, the age and sex breakdown of the population, and where children are located. The Ontario Marginalization Index is also outlined in this section, providing a more in-depth look

into the population of Sault Ste. Marie using socioeconomic risk indicators such as material deprivation and residential instability. This helps to determine which neighbourhoods are more prone to socioeconomic risk. A map showing the overall degree of marginalization by Census Tract in Sault Ste. Marie can be viewed on page 25.

The Health and Physical Environment section is a general assessment of infant and child health and services, as well as nutrition, safety, mental health and physical activity. Information on the birth rate in Sault Ste. Marie, teen mothers, the Infant and Child Development Program, Asthma and Oral Health can be found in this section. Nutrition program statistics are also outlined and include the Student Nutrition Program, the Healthy Food Basket, the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program, Community Kitchens

and Gardens, lunch programs, Soup Kitchens and Food Banks. Children's safety is addressed as well, with statistics on childhood injuries and crime. More and more importance is being placed on the physical activity levels of children due to the rise in obesity rates in Canada. Playgrounds are an important source for the healthy physical and social development of children. Page 51 begins a study on the number of playgrounds within walking distance in Sault Ste. Marie and their general quality.

It is important to find out where children shine in Sault Ste. Marie, as well as where they may need more attention.

Executive Summary

The Education and Child Care section reviews the cost and availability of childcare in Sault Ste. Marie, subsidies, service gaps and funding changes. JK and SK enrolment numbers for the four area school boards have been captured and can be found on page 70. The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a questionnaire that uses five domains (Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Development and Communication Skills and General Knowledge) to measure development among senior kindergarten students and whether they are meeting developmental expectations for their age. EDI results have been compiled and mapped for Sault Ste. Marie and can be found starting on page 72.

The section titled Child & Family reports on family structure, with information on the percentage of families with children under 6, median family income, and youth living in low income. EarlyON Centre services, programs, location information, and visitor statistics are outlined in this section. Prenatal education is designed to provide expectant mothers and their partners with information about all aspects of pregnancy and delivery to aid their transition to parenting. Information on parenting, including classes, Parenting Programs/Young Parents Connection, Special Needs and Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) can also be found in this section. Children's Aid Society and Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services Child Protection statistics are located at the end of the section, starting on page 120.

Following each section is a summary detailing how the indicators have changed since the "Our Children, Their Future" report of 2015. By comparing this data from report-to-report, services can be modified and implemented to better serve all children in Sault Ste. Marie, giving them their best start towards a bright future.



Introduction

This volume of the Children's Report is the fourth in a series that was originally commissioned by the Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma Best Start Network in 2011. Since the last report in 2015, the Network has developed into the Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma Child and Family Network. This Network continues to be responsible for local early years planning and consists of representatives from local agencies providing services to families and children, covering the spectrum of health, education, social supports and specialized children's services.

In 2016, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to transform previously funded child and family programs into an integrated system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 and their parents or caregivers and established their 2017 Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework. The initiative was to provide enhancements to and create an integrated continuum of learning for children, supporting Ontario's early years professionals and give more children access to early years and child care programs across the system. This included increasing access to child and family programs as well as a commitment to help 100,000 more children – from birth to age 4 – access licensed care. The plan set the foundation for a more responsive and affordable system.¹

In 2018, the ministry moved forward on its commitment to integrate four programs formerly known Ontario Early Years Centres (Best Start Hubs in Northern Ontario), Child Care Resource Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres and Better Beginnings, Better Futures, into EarlyON Child and Family Centres. Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSMSSAB) became responsible for the local management of EarlyON Child and Family Centres as part of their responsibility for the service system management of child care and other human services. As such, the District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board (DSSMSSAB) in Sault Ste. Marie, and Algoma District Services Administration Board (ADSAB) assumed this responsibility locally. All child and family programs were integrated and streamlined into EarlyON Child and Family Centres, with increased access to all families a priority.

To guide early years planning in recent years, several community consultations were conducted to gather a holistic depiction of the early years system across Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma District. This included consultations with families, service providers, boards of directors, community partners and school board partners. In addition to the seven focus groups held with community partners and parents, data was compiled from online teacher and public parent surveys in both official languages as well as child care and EarlyON staff surveys. Focus groups participants included Child Care Supervisors from licensed child care and home child care programs, local early years service providers, the Network, and many other community planning partners. In addition, Algoma District School Board/Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board Junior and Senior Kindergarten Teachers and classroom Early Childhood Educators, the Integrated Services Committee - community organizations concerned with the special needs of children, were consulted. Waabinong Head Start Child & Family Resource Centre also supported a culturally relevant focus group dedicated to Indigenous parents.

The goal of the Network is to celebrate successes, identify issues and concerns that jointly effect children and families in both the District of Algoma and the District of Sault Ste. Marie and to combine resources and efforts to ensure that service delivery across all of Algoma is integrated and responsive to the needs of all. To ensure this responsive approach, parent participation is central to the planning process and input from parents is sought on a regular basis.

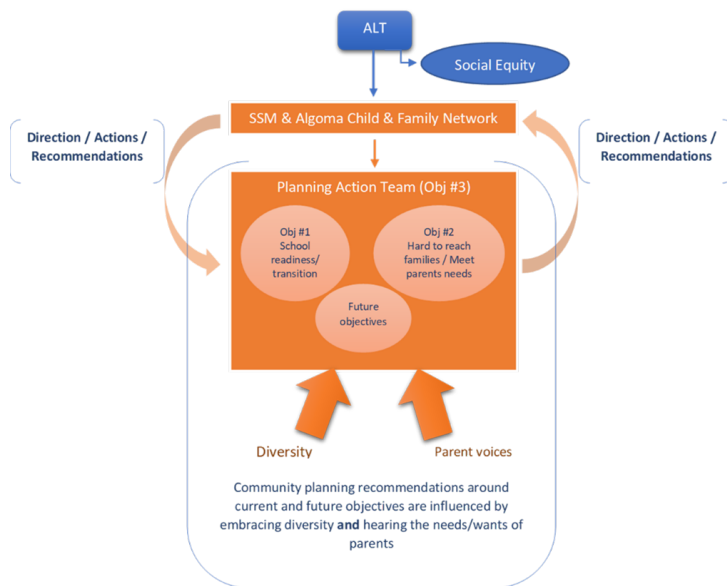
In 2019, a facilitated strategic planning session was held with the Network. The preliminary highlights of the qualitative data gathered from the community consultations was used to inform the development of the Network's planning and data analysis process.

At that time, the Network identified three priority areas for strategic direction for the next two years. These included improving transitions into school for children and families, understanding families' needs and reaching hard-to-reach families, and moving towards one table for community early years planning in Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma District.

Introduction

Terms of Reference were established to reflect the new strategic direction and new committee name – Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma Child and Family Network. Next steps involved members collaborating on measurable outcomes for the three objectives.

In 2020, to better meet the needs of the community through this committee, a working group – Planning Action Team (PAT) was created.



The Child and Family Network table includes members who sit in a decision-making role within their organizations. This table will be making decisions during meetings based on, but not solely, on information gathered by the PAT.

PAT was created to meet objective three – to amalgamate the various committees into one table. This group will do the “work” of the Network table in making recommendations for the two remaining current objectives and report back to that table. The overriding philosophy when working on the recommendations will be to keep diversity and parent voices top of mind.

Within the lens of social equity, the Network strives to improve the Early

Development Indicator (EDI) outcomes in all domains for children in the community. Early years services across the system provide the forum to support this goal and aligning early years planning with local community direction is strategically important to expanding and improving services for children and families. The Network, which coordinates with the Algoma Leadership Table, has always prioritized this work and will continue to incorporate it into their own Network planning.

The Vision of the Network remains that “all children born and growing up in the Districts of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma will achieve their social, intellectual, economic, physical and emotional potential”. This will be achieved through an ongoing process whereby local service providers and relevant stakeholders engage in progressively greater degrees of joint service activity along an integrated continuum to provide families with better access to services.

The DSSMSSAB Early Years and ADSAB Children’s Services Divisions have been developing new system service plans. These plans assess the needs of the community and prioritize strategic direction, outcomes and implementation in accordance with provincial interest for early years services. With the collaborative efforts of the Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma Child and Family Network Planning Table, consultations have resulted in informed system plans. Built upon the early years system strengths, the system plans will identify gaps in capacity within the system and will support the four key components of Ontario’s vision for Early Years services: Affordability, Accessibility, Responsiveness and High Quality.

COVID-19 has naturally disrupted and delayed both the completion of this document and the work that the Network identified as part of their strategic plan. This in no way diminishes the work that needs to be done and the intentions of everyone involved to move forward once it is deemed safe to do so. For their part, every member organization has continued to put children and families first throughout the past year and have had positive impacts on many as the communities work together to address additional needs that have surfaced during this pandemic.

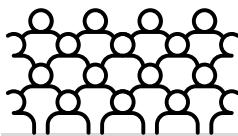
Community Overview

The Community Overview section of this report focuses mainly on Census of Canada 2016 data, since it is the most reliable and up-to-date population-level information available. The 2015 report contained data from the 2011 Census.

WHERE HAVE WE GONE SINCE THE LAST REPORT?

Population

Decrease



1,715 people
or 2.1%

The overall population of the DSSMSSAB area declined by 1,715 persons (or by 2.1%) between 2011 and 2016.

Child Population

Increase

(Age 0 to 6)



115 children
or 2.3%

The population of children aged 0 to 6 has increased in the DSSMSSAB area since 2011. There were 5,215 children aged 0 to 6 in 2016; up from 5,100 in 2011. This was an increase of 115 children (or 2.3%).

Youth Population

Decrease

Age 7 to 12



70 children
or 1.5%

The population of youth aged 7 to 12 has decreased in the DSSMSSAB area since 2011. There were 4,555 children aged 7 to 12 in 2016; down from 4,625 in 2011. This was a decrease of 70 children (or 1.5%).

Indigenous Identity Child/Youth Population

Increase



445 children
or 28.3%

The population of children/youth aged 0 to 14 who identify as Indigenous has increased in the DSSMSSAB area since 2006. There were 2,015 Indigenous Identity children aged 0 to 14 in 2016; up from 1,570 in 2006. This was an increase of 445 children (or 28.3%).

Francophone Child/Youth Population

No Change



The population of Francophone children/youth aged 0 to 14 in the DSSMSSAB area remained nearly the same between 2011 (245) and 2016 (250).

Children Living in Neighbourhoods of High Residential Instability

No Change



This indicator is new to this report; however, we can compare the 2011 population to the more recent 2016 population. Of the children age 0 to 6 in the DSSMSSAB area, 275 lived in neighbourhoods classified as having a high degree of "Residential Instability" by the Ontario Marginalization Index in 2016. In 2011, there were 280 children living in these neighbourhoods.

Children Living in Materially Deprived Neighbourhoods

Favourable Decrease



This indicator is new to this report; however, we can compare the 2011 population to the more recent 2016 population. Of the children age 0 to 6 in the DSSMSSAB area, 870 lived in neighbourhoods classified as having a high degree of "Material Deprivation" by the Ontario Marginalization Index in 2016. This is down slightly from 885 in 2011, a change of 1.7%.

Children Living in Neighbourhoods of High Dependency

Unfavourable Increase



This indicator is new to this report; however, we can compare the 2011 population to the more recent 2016 population. Of the children age 0 to 6 in the DSSMSSAB area, 3,665 lived in neighbourhoods classified as having a high degree of "Dependency" by the Ontario Marginalization Index in 2016. This is up slightly from 3,640 in 2011, a change of 0.7%.

Children Living in Highly Marginalized Neighbourhoods

Favourable Decrease



This indicator is new to this report; however, we can compare the 2011 population to the more recent 2016 population. Of the children age 0 to 6 in the DSSMSSAB area, 435 lived in neighbourhoods classified as having a high degree of "Marginalization" by the Ontario Marginalization Index in 2016. This is down slightly from 445 in 2011, a change of 2.2%.

Recent Immigrants

N/A

This indicator is new to this report.

Change cannot be measured

Health & Physical Environment

The Health and Physical Environment section of this report builds on the existing indicators selected for the 2015 report. For each indicator, several years of data have been added.



WHERE HAVE WE GONE SINCE THE LAST REPORT?

Unfavourable Decrease

Births



The number of live births in the DSSMSSAB area has dropped between 2015 (766) and 2019 (625). The number of live births recorded in 2019 was the lowest total in the past 10 years. The crude birth rate in the DSSMSSAB area in 2019 was lower than the birth rate in Ontario.

Favourable Decrease

Births to Teenage Mothers



The percentage of births to teenage mothers has dropped since 2015, from 5.6% of total births in 2015 to 3.2% of total births in 2019.

No Change

Infant & Child Development Program



The Infant & Child Development Program had a total of 548 clients who received services in the 2019/20 fiscal year, nearly the same total as 2014/15 (549 clients). There were fewer referrals received by the ICDP in 2019/20 (161) than in 2014/15 (256). The number of referrals recorded in 2019/20 was the lowest total in the past 7 years.

No Change

Asthma



The rate of asthma per 1,000 children in the DSSMSSAB area was similar in 2015 (11.4 cases per 1,000 children) and 2019 (12.4 cases per 1,000 children).

No Change

Oral Health



There was little change in the percentage of JK students who were screened and found to be caries free (meaning free from tooth decay) between 2015/16 (72%) and 2019/20 (73%). There was also little change in the percentage of SK students who were screened and found to be caries free between 2015/16 (65%) and 2019/20 (66%).

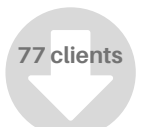
Unfavourable Increase



As expected, the cost of a nutritious food basket continues to rise. The monthly cost for a family of four was \$975.85 in 2019, an increase of around 7% from \$913.93 in 2015.

Decrease

Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program



In 2015, the number of participating clients was 81. In 2016, clients increased to 146; however, as of 2019 only 69 clients were receiving services through the CPNP.

Favourable Increase



The number of meals served in the 2019/20 school year was 1,005,755, up 10% from 912,946 in 2014/15. It is interesting to note that the most meals served in a single school year happened in 2017/18 with 1,291,941 meals served.

Childhood Injuries



Childhood injury data is calculated based on the number of hospital visits by children aged 0 to 6 related to unintentional injury. In 2019, the rate of childhood injuries in Sault Ste. Marie was 29.6 per 1,000 children aged 0 to 6, a decrease of 8.5 per 1,000 in 2015 (38.1 per 1,000).



Health & Physical Environment

Unfavourable Increase
Overall Crime Rates



There has been a sharp increase in the Sault Ste. Marie Area (excluding the First Nation Reserves) crime rate between 2015 (5,279 incidents per 100,000 population) and 2018 (8,072 incidents per 100,000 population). This has been primarily driven by the rise of property crime.

Favourable Decrease
Youth Crime Rates



The police-reported youth crime rate (age 12 to 17) fell between 2015 (6,458 incidents per 100,000 population) and 2018 (3,939 incidents per 100,000 population).

No Change
Playgrounds: Gaps



The playground gap identified in downtown SSM in 2016 has not been formally addressed; however, the municipality and a number of groups have expressed interest in physical activity programming in the downtown area.

Healthy Babies Healthy Children
Mental Health
Food Environment
Community Kitchens
Community Gardens
Every Breakfast Counts
Soup Kitchens & Food Banks
Playgrounds: Equipment Condition

N/A

Change cannot be measured

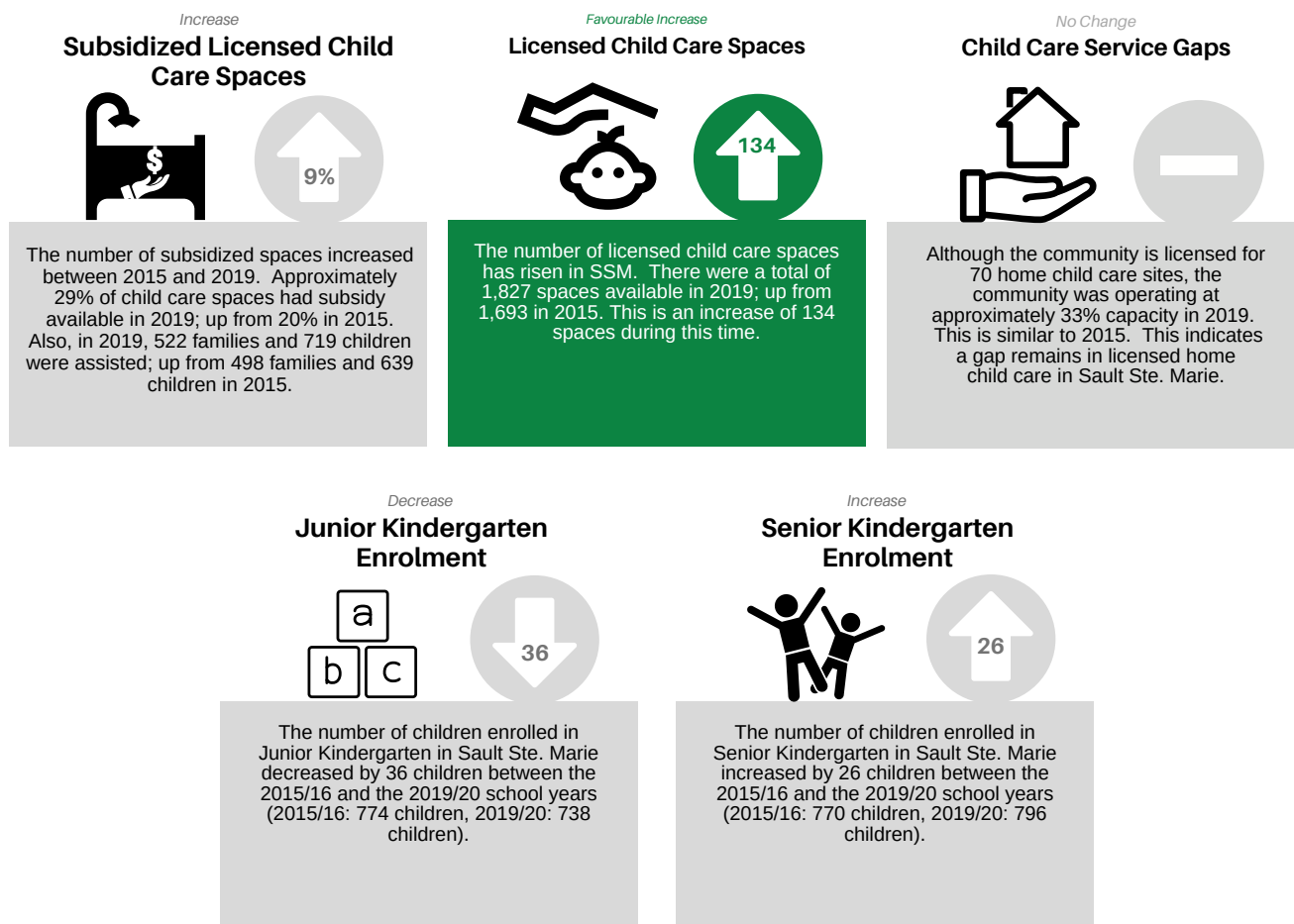
These indicators are either new to this report or a comparison could not be made.

Child Care & Education

The Child Care and Education section of this report builds on the existing indicators selected for the 2015 report. For most indicators, we are comparing to the situation in 2015.



WHERE HAVE WE GONE SINCE THE LAST REPORT?



Kids Being Kids

N/A

This indicator is new to this report.

Child Care & Education



No Change

EDI: Physical Health & Wellbeing Vulnerability



In 2017/18, 18.9% of SK children in Sault Ste. Marie were deemed vulnerable in the Physical Health and Well-Being domain; nearly the same as 2014/15 where 18.4% SK children were deemed vulnerable. No subdomains saw a significant increase or decrease in the percentage of children not meeting developmental expectations.

Favourable Decrease

EDI: Social Competence Vulnerability



In 2017/18, 10.6% of SK children in Sault Ste. Marie were deemed vulnerable in the Social Competence domain; down from 13.4% in 2014/2015. The Overall Social Competence and Responsibility and Respect subdomains both saw statistically significant improvements in the percentage of children not meeting developmental expectations.

Favourable Decrease

EDI: Emotional Maturity Vulnerability



In 2017/18, 12.1% of SK children in Sault Ste. Marie were deemed vulnerable in the Emotional Maturity domain; down from 16.4% in 2014/2015. This represents a statistically significant decrease of 4.3 percentage points in this domain between the 2014/15 and the 2017/18 implementations. No subdomains saw a significant increase or decrease in the percentage of children not meeting developmental expectations; however, all saw some improvements.

No Change

EDI: Language & Cognitive Development Vulnerability



In 2017/18, 7.6% of SK children in Sault Ste. Marie were deemed vulnerable in the Language & Cognitive Development domain; nearly the same as 2014/15 where 7.1% SK children were deemed vulnerable. The Basic Numeracy subdomain saw a statistically significant increase in the percentage of children not meeting developmental expectations.

No Change

EDI: Communication Skills & General Knowledge Vulnerability



In 2017/18, 8.2% of SK children in Sault Ste. Marie were deemed vulnerable in the Communication Skills & General Knowledge domain; nearly the same as 2014/15 where 8% SK children were deemed vulnerable. The single subdomain that belongs to this domain saw a statistically significant increase in the percentage of children not meeting developmental expectations.

Favourable Decrease

EDI: Vulnerability in One or More Domains



In 2017/18, 29.5% of SK children in Sault Ste. Marie were deemed vulnerable in one or more domains; down from 31.3% in 2014/2015.

Favourable Decrease

EDI: Vulnerability in Two or More Domains



In 2017/18, 14% of SK children in Sault Ste. Marie were deemed vulnerable in two or more domains; down from 16.1% in 2014/2015.

Decrease

Best for Kids



In 2019, there were 51 children that were registered in the Best for Kids program. This is a decrease from 2018 (80 registered children) and 2017 (86 registered children).

Child & Family

The Child & Family section of this report builds on the existing indicators selected for the 2015 report. For each indicator, several years of data have been added.



WHERE HAVE WE GONE SINCE THE LAST REPORT?

Favourable Decrease

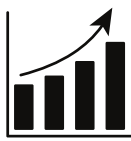
Lone Parent Families with Young Children



Of the families with young children in Sault Ste. Marie, a slightly lower proportion of them were headed by a lone-parent in 2017 than in 2013.
(2013: 30.5% of families with young children, 2017: 28.8% of families with young children).

Favourable Increase

Median Income



The median incomes for couple-parent and lone-parent families have both increased between 2013 and 2017. Couple-parent families saw an increase of \$13,872 and lone-parent families saw an increase of \$7,260 during this time.
Please note that median income for lone parent families was still below the Ontario average in 2017.

Favourable Decrease

Families Living in Low Income



In 2017, a lower proportion of all Sault Ste. Marie families were living in low-income situations than in 2013. In 2017, 16.3% of SSM families lived in a low-income situation; down from 18.9% in 2013.

No Change

Social Assistance



In 2017, 12.9% of Sault Ste. Marie families received income support from social assistance, nearly the same as 12.3% of families in 2013.

Favourable Increase

EarlyON Centres



2019 saw the highest number of total child visits counted in the past four years with 1,300 additional visits than the previous year. The increase was mostly due to a higher number of children 7+ visiting the sites in 2019.

Unfavourable Decrease

Prenatal Education



In 2015, the number of participating clients in the DSSMSSAB area was 173, however this fell to 104 clients in 2019.

Decrease

Parenting Programs/ Young Parents Connection



The number of youths who have participated in the Young Parents Connection program has decreased between 2015 (122) and 2019 (58).

Special Needs Resourcing

Triple P

Children's Aid Society

Nogdawindamin Family and

Community Services Child Protection

N/A

These indicators are either new to this report or data collection methods have changed so a comparison could not be made.



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