

Nurturing the Next Generation The Environmental Scan



Research Questions

1. How do early child development (ECD) programs, services and initiatives in Peel align with the Biodevelopmental Framework?
2. From the perspective of service providers, what is the capacity of the community to support ECD?

Methods

- 45 interviews with managers and seven focus groups with frontline staff across Public Health, Human Services and external community organizations.

Key Findings

Re: The alignment of services with the Biodevelopmental Framework

- Healthy attachment, parent education and skill development are strong components of ECD programming across Peel.
- Service providers recognize Peel Public Health (PPH) as a leader in nutrition. However, they believe that changes in the PPH service delivery model has resulted in gaps in nutrition education and supports for families with young children.
- Gaps were identified in mental health services for children and adults, early identification of developmental delays, family relationships and children's physical activity.

Re: The capacity of the community to support ECD

- The ECD service sector in Peel is characterized by strong community leadership, competent staff and a commitment to service coordination and collaboration.
- Communication among ECD organizations needs to be improved.
- Long waitlists, staff burnout and ineffective outreach strategies are common challenges.
- Local policy and advocacy initiatives that focus on outcomes for children are lacking.
- Peel's built environment increases families' social isolation and limits access to services.
- Staff experience challenges responding to ethno-culturally diverse families.
- The ECD service sector is confusing and difficult for parents to navigate.

Opportunities for Public Health

- Work with community partners to develop innovative strategies to address priority gaps: healthy relationships, mental health, early identification, children's physical activity and the built environment.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to develop policy and advocacy initiatives that support optimal child development.
- Advocate for child-friendly built environments, accessible ECD services and spaces that support social connections for families.
- Promote and deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate ECD services and key messages.