



An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

Fall 2007

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Are you a good employer?

To assess if you are a good employer, look at your centre honestly and objectively. Note how you interact with and respond to staff, parents and children. Note where the staff prepare materials or relax during breaks. Check out how many staff enroll in professional development courses.

Look at the environment as though you are newcomer to the centre and ask yourself if you are a good employer.

Taking a step back to reflect on your role as director and to look at the atmosphere of your centre can tell you how the centre supports or does not support staff and quality child care. With the current difficulty in recruiting trained, early childhood educators and low unemployment rates generally, employers cannot afford to overlook the needs of their employees. To develop employee loyalty and retain staff, job satisfaction is crucial.



The Partners in Quality project, sponsored by the Canadian Child Care Federation, identifies three major elements of work satisfaction for early childhood educators:

- wages
- working conditions
- administrative style and organizational climate

All three affect quality. Dissatisfied staff tend to show their feelings in their interactions with children. Research shows they are more likely to be harsh and restrictive and less likely to provide activities that support and encourage child development. Dissatisfied staff may also express their feelings by leaving their jobs and even the field of child care.

The Partners in Quality project reports that staff are more satisfied with their jobs when administrators provide well-organized, flexible working environments; encourage staff input on policy and program; offer regular opportunities to discuss children; and support professional growth.

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Are you a good employer?

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To create a positive work environment at your child care centre consider:

Director's administrative style and the organizational climate

- Smile, greet and interact with each staff each day.
- Model a respectful and harmonious work environment.
- Acknowledge staff's accomplishments.
- Create a culture of lifelong learning.
- Develop a clear mission statement, goals, policies, procedures and work responsibilities in consultation with employees.
- Develop specific job descriptions that outline expectations and responsibilities for trained and untrained staff.
- Do annual staff evaluations and encourage self-assessment and goal setting.
- Identify training gaps for career development and in access to resources.
- Offer to support professional development and post secondary education, such as time off and paying for all or part of tuition and books.
- Match staff's abilities, skills and interests to program requirements.
- Evaluate programs; ask for feedback on improvements; follow through on approved recommendations.
- Delegate responsibility.
- Follow employment standards.



Working Conditions

- Arrange employee space with areas to store personal belongings, separate staff washrooms, provide comfortable areas to relax and prepare materials with phones and computer access.
- Create an inviting learning and play environment for children and adults.
- Support healthy living programs, like smoking cessation and nutrition or provide fitness passes.
- Offer family leave and sick leave days.
- Help staff with their own child care costs.
- Provide regular breaks for staff accommodating the needs of both children and staff.
- Offer staff planning time with resources and a private place to work.
- Provide staff orientation and mentor new staff.
- Encourage staff to apply the Manitoba Child Care Association's code of ethics and ethical decision making when problem solving.
- Use humour to lighten the workplace atmosphere.

Excerpts from *Partners in Quality*, Canadian Child Care Federation, Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky, 1999

Diploma Program Benefits Rainbow Day Nursery

Rainbow Day Nursery has benefited “big time” from the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Workplace Diploma Program, says director Diane Hale. To date, six Child Care Assistants (CCAs) have completed the ECE Workplace Diploma Program and three others are currently finishing their Early Childhood Education (ECE) II education through this program.

Everyone at Rainbow Day Nursery has benefited from investing in employee education, says Diane. CCAs enrolled in workplace training return to work with fresh ideas that help the centre grow and develop. They address behavior management more effectively and consider the developmental stages of the children in designing programs and activities.

Before the ECE Workplace Diploma Program was implemented in 2000, CCAs found it difficult to improve their qualifications. While CCAs demonstrated their enthusiasm and commitment to child care every day, many could not afford to quit their jobs to return to school full time. When this new ECE course was offered, Diane realized there was finally an education program designed to meet the personal needs of CCAs while supporting them to upgrade their education.

CCAs or family child care providers who are enrolled in the ECE Workplace Diploma Program offered at Red River College:

- attend school two days a week
- work three days a week at a child care centre or a family child care home
- receive their full time salaries while attending school

Through a staff replacement grant provided by the Manitoba Child Care Program, centres or homes receive funds for replacement staff while students attend classes. To qualify for the workplace diploma program, CCAs or family child care providers must pass a Grade 10 reading test, have two years experience in child care and be currently employed in licensed child care facilities.

Board members and the director of Rainbow Day Nursery believe the ECE Workplace Diploma Program is an opportunity to strengthen their existing pool of employees. CCAs at their centre already understand the children’s needs, know the centre routines and enjoy the child care field. They encourage their staff to enroll in the workplace diploma course and the centre provides financial support.



Krista Hicks, Ashley Hicks and Diane Hale

Before the government started providing a staff replacement grant, Rainbow Day Nursery paid the CCAs their full time salaries while they attended school. The centre continues to pay for all their staff’s books and provides them with interest-free loans for tuition.

Long time employees, interested in new approaches and the latest research in child care, learn from the students who give in-house workshops so all staff have current information about best practices in child care.

Meeting the required proportion of trained staff

Encouraging CCAs to return to school has also helped Rainbow Day Nursery meet its required number of trained staff. All but one of the employees finishing the ECE Workplace Diploma Program are still employed at the centre. Diane believes the new ECEs feel loyal to the centre and want to give back to the centre that supported them in their education. Plus, salary increases come with employees’ new qualifications.

Rainbow Day Nursery will continue to encourage their CCAs to enroll in the program, says Diane who plans to expand her facilities which means she’ll need even more trained ECEs.

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Diploma Program Benefits Rainbow Day Nursery

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Mother and Daughter Team

Krista Hicks and her daughter, Ashley, both work at Rainbow Day Nursery, and are taking advantage of the ECE workplace training. After nine years as a CCA, Krista was happy to enroll in the first ECE Workplace Diploma Program offered at Red River College in 2000. She wanted to upgrade her education but said it was impossible for her to quit her job to return to school full time. The ECE workplace training was a perfect fit.

Krista says going to school only two days a week and working three allowed her to immediately practise her new skills at the centre. She sees the children are actually working and learning when they are playing and understands her own child care practices better.

Succeeding in the program gave Krista the confidence to set higher goals and accept more responsibility. Immediately after finishing her ECE II diploma program, she returned to evening school and completed an ECE III program, specializing in infant care. Today, she works as the preschool supervisor and she hopes to move to a higher administrative level in the future.

Watching her mother's success and enjoyment in the child care field, Ashley decided to work in child care too. She was hired at Rainbow Day Nursery as a CCA as soon as she graduated from high school. After working in the centre for almost four years, she is now enrolled in the ECE Workplace Diploma Program and hopes to graduate as an ECE II in December 2008. She now works in the school age program.



Announcements

Mary Miles (Humphrey) has been appointed Chair of the Child Care Education Program Approval Committee (CCEPAC). Mary worked with Child Care from 1976 to 1989 and held various positions including Family Day Care Coordinator, Policy Analyst, Assistant Director and Director. She then moved to Manitoba Justice where she worked as Executive Director of Judicial Services and as Special Advisor to the Deputy Minister. She retired from the Manitoba Civil Service in 2006.

The former chair, Elin Ibrahim, will continue on as a member of CCEPAC representing the Manitoba Child Care Program as the new Quality Enhancement Co-ordinator.



Healthy Practices for Infection Control



Look in the mail for the revised *Infection Control Guidelines for Early Learning and Child Care* and a series of posters on healthy practices for infection control.

The Manitoba Child Care Program (MCCP), in consultation with Public Health Inspectors and Manitoba Health, designed appealing, laminated posters on hand washing, diapering and other routine practices for preventing the spread of infection.

Your centre will receive five posters:

What Do You Do When You Go...Aachoo! This poster is best placed on entrance bulletin boards. It lets people know that your facility is concerned about good health practices.

Children's Handwashing: This instructional poster for children is designed to promote literacy and guide children in required handwashing procedure. Post it near sinks where children wash their hands and use it as a teaching tool.

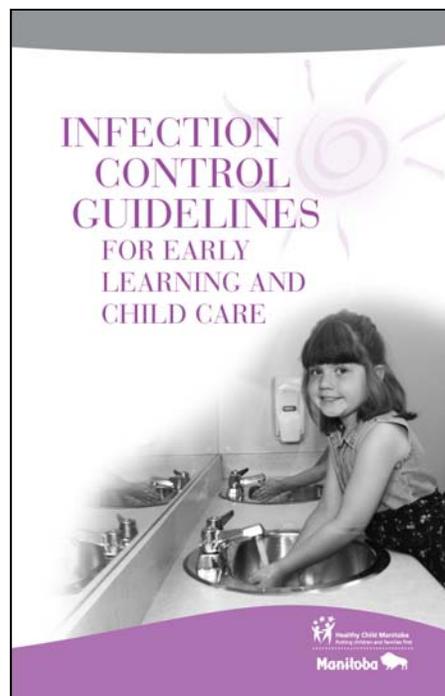
Adult Handwashing: Put this poster in washrooms and by sinks where handwashing is done.

Cleaning and Sanitizing: Put this poster above sinks and near areas that are regularly cleaned and sanitized with a bleach solution throughout the day, such as tables and sinks.

Diapering: Place this poster above, or near, diapering areas.

The *Infection Control Guidelines for Early Learning and Child Care* provides more detailed instructions on preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses.

The procedures are accepted practices as outlined in the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition* (2005); *Well Beings: A Guide to Promote Physical Health, Safety and Emotional Well-Being of Children in Child Care Centres and Family Day Care Homes* (1996, 2nd ed.); and *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs* (2002, 2nd ed.)





An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba



Recent Additions École technique et professionnelle collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface

Diplôme avancé en leadership pour la jeune enfance (EJE III) [advanced diploma in leadership for early childhood]

This new advanced diploma is recognized by the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy and leads to the designation of *éducatrice ou éducateur de la jeune enfance III* [early childhood educator III]. The program will be launched on the Internet in January 2008, when the following first course will be offered:

COMP -104 -Introduction à la comptabilité [introduction to accounting]

The course will cover the following topics: accounting cycles of non-profit and for-profit service organizations, internal control and certain concepts of taxation. The role of financial management in the daily decisions made by business owners or managers, and directors of early childhood centres in particular, is discussed in detail. The entire course is based on a typical budget for child care centres in Manitoba.

The remaining eight (8) courses that make up the program will be offered in sequence.

For additional information please contact: Dominique Arbez at 237-1818 ext. 464



Credit courses - Diplôme en éducation de la jeune enfance (EJE II) [early childhood education diploma program]

PP-208 LA GARDE EN MILIEU FAMILIAL [home child care]

(45 hours)

Students may register at any time

Correspondence course

Tuition fee: \$250

PR-116 LE JEU DE L'ENFANT I [children's play I]

(45 hours)

Tuesdays - 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

February 5, 2008 - June 10, 2008

Audioconference via the Internet

Deadline for registration - January 7, 2008

Tuition fee: \$250

These two courses:

- meet the requirements of the Manitoba *Community Child Care Standards Act* to obtain a licence to operate a child care home or to work as an assistant in a child care facility;
- are credited as part of the *Diplôme en éducation de la jeune enfance* offered at the École technique et professionnelle;

■ are eligible for a reimbursement of tuition fees to a maximum of \$250. Additional information on financial assistance may be obtained by calling 945-0776.

Information: Éveline Garand at 237-1818 ext. 478



Congratulations to Janice Robinson!

Janice Robinson, who is completing the Competency Based Assessment (CBA) program, has received the 2007 Exceptional Caregiver of the Year Award from the Manitoba Child Care Association.

A few years ago, Janice decided to upgrade her qualifications to an ECE II classification. She began the CBA program while continuing to work in her full time position in early childhood education. During her eight years in the child care field, Janice has always demonstrated a natural ability and exceptional skills working with children and their families. Her openness during the CBA education process is now reflected in her enhanced ability to work with the children, their parents and her coworkers.

She was one of the first staff in her centre to initiate an emergent curriculum. All the activities Janice provides are child-inspired and based on observations of the children's developmental needs and interests. She supports and encourages co-workers to try new things. She also regularly provides information to parents about their child and created a pamphlet called *Tips for Guiding Children's Common Behaviors*.

Janice is a worthy recipient of the award and makes a positive contribution to child care every day.



Janice Robinson

Did you know...

In January 2008, **SISTARS (Sisters Initiating Steps Toward a Renewed Society)** is offering a full time early childhood educator diploma program in partnership with Red River College at their location at 49 Euclid Avenue in North Point Douglas. Classes are held Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for over 2 1/2 years. There are school breaks at Christmas and in the spring and summer. Qualified early childhood educators can expect to begin their careers earning between \$29,000 and \$32,000. Applications are now being accepted at SISTARS. For more information, call 204-947-9411.

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Registered Child Care Online users include 92 per cent of centres, 53 per cent of nursery schools and 63 per cent of family child care homes.



Depending on student interest, Red River College (RRC) is hoping to offer **Workplace Early Childhood Education Training** in the Interlake, Central and Eastman areas in September 2008.

If offered, the Manitoba Child Care Program will subsidize the training so students will pay the same tuition in the rural areas as in Winnipeg. Students go to school two days a week and receive their full time salaries through a replacement grant paid to their centre.

If you are interested or need more information on the ECE Workplace Diploma Program, contact Winnipeg RRC campus:

- Jane Botting – 204-632-2328, jbotting@rrc.mb.ca
- Kim Hanna – 204-632-3070, khanna@rrc.mb.ca

Regional RRC campus:

- Gimli – 204-642-5496, gimli@rrc.mb.ca
- Portage La Prairie – 204-428-6322, portage@rrc.mb.ca
- Steinbach – 204-320-2500, steinbach@rrc.mb.ca
- Winkler – 204-325-9672, winkler@rrc.mb.ca

Supporting Men in ECE

“Gender balance is good for young children,” says Ron Blatz, Executive Director of Discovery Children’s Centre. He heads up a support group for men in child care; is actively working to recruit more men into the field in Manitoba; attends conferences on the subject and communicates with men and women dedicated to the cause from around the globe. Ron has been advocating for a greater role for men in early learning and child care for some time now. And people are taking notice.

Ron points out that while men’s roles in child rearing and the family have progressed significantly in the past few decades, the ECE field is not reflecting that. Not only is it important that the field represent society in general, he notes that there are many benefits to having more men involved in early learning and child care. Children see positive male role models, which for some may not be available at home. Research has shown that fathers may find it easier to talk to male staff. And all staff have the chance to benefit from different perspectives in pedagogy. The sidebar highlights more.

Where are the men?

Interest in having more males in the field is not new. Since the 1960’s, with the rise of equality movements, this has been the subject of research. The European Commission Network on Child Care in 1996 set a target of 20% participation of men in the child care workforce by 2006. Goals were not reached, but Norway and Denmark have been most successful in recruiting men, with 9% and 8% male participation today. The UK has targeted 6%, but has yet to reach the goal. Belgium has about that amount. Despite these modest improvements, women still dominate around the world. Why is this?

Some people blame it on wages and benefits, but this is only part of the story. Men are dramatically under-represented in elementary schools, too, where only about 15% of teachers are men (and many of those teach grades five and six). There’s obviously more going on.



Staff and children at Discovery Children’s Centre

Others point to a society that still considers this to be “women’s work” and that men would be embarrassed to tell people that they are in this line of work. Status remains an important consideration for some.

A British study showed that while men might consider a job in ECE, they are put off not only by concerns about pay and status, but by the fear that they would be unwelcome because of the risks of paedophiles and a sense that parents wouldn’t want their children looked after by a man. As it turns out, this and other studies show that most parents (as many as 9 in 10) like the idea of men in ECE.

In the end, it’s probably a combination of all these factors. And with men making up about 4% of the ECE workforce in Manitoba, knowing some of the causes helps provide strategies about how to improve.

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Benefits of Gender Balance

- Positive role models for children, especially boys and children without a male role model at home
- Children and staff benefit from different perspectives, teaching styles and ways of communicating
- Men can bring differing qualities, like engaging in more adventurous play
- New ways of looking at issues, like the appropriateness of physical play and expectations to sit quietly
- Challenges the stereotypes of women and men by showing men are capable caregivers
- Boys, especially school age, may be more comfortable and feel better understood
- Fathers may become more engaged if they have a man on staff to talk to and are aware of a more welcoming environment for men
- Like encouraging ethnic and cultural diversity, gender balance teaches children about basic human qualities and the value of diversity



Supporting Men in ECE

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What can you do?

Creating an environment that is friendly for men will help make the field more attractive and help keep men who are there. The box below gives tips on how to achieve that. Ron has been working on a few, too.

Making connections is important. The Men in ECE Support Group, which Ron helps organize, gives an opportunity for men to share their experiences and stories. After several meetings, the group opened the invitation to both women and men for their October 17th session. The meeting focussed on the benefits and challenges of working towards a gender balanced workforce. Ron also gratefully acknowledges the opportunity he has had to make international connections through a World Forum on Men in ECE.

Making a commitment is important, too. *Club 2-10* is part of Ron's approach to helping people understand the issue and getting everyone to join in. "Centres commit themselves to having a minimum of two male staff and working towards 10% by 2010." It is already a success, with over 50 centres signed up so far.

Of course, signing up is just the first step. You need to find the men to hire.



Ron Blatz

"For 27 years I took a generic gender neutral approach, which never produced a gender balanced workforce. In May of this year, I decided to pen a new advertisement." Ron placed the ad in the General category of the paper and not in the Early Childhood section. It read:

Looking for a few good men with the courage to work in Child Care. Discovery Centre believes gender balance is good for young children. Interested? Call Donna or Ron at

"To my astonishment we had 30 men inquire about the job. I was stunned and overwhelmingly pleased to know that in Winnipeg there were more men than I could have imagined interested in this line of work."

As a result of these efforts, and in making Discovery a male-friendly environment, there are now 10 men on staff. If you would like more information about *Club 2-10* or the Men in ECE Support Group, you are welcome to contact:

Ron Blatz, Executive Director
Discovery Children's Centre Inc.
(204) 889-2689

More Strategies to Consider

Creating male-friendly environments

- Review policies to make sure they are gender-neutral and use language free of gender-bias
- Set the tone that men are welcomed and supported, especially if you are the director
- Avoid assigning roles only based on gender
- Think about your own attitudes and what you can do to be more accepting of men in the field
- Let men know their presence is valued
- Start men working with school-age children
- Display pictures of male staff in the hallway and newsletters sent home
- Match male staff with mentors
- Encourage participation in support groups, networks or mentoring outside the centre

Recruiting more men

- Make active recruitment of men a goal
- Write ads aimed at men or that include "men encouraged to apply"
- Put ads in columns or publications read by men
- Offer incentives to staff who recruit male staff
- Encourage male CCAs to follow workplace training
- Recruit volunteers from high schools, colleges and universities – a positive experience may help them decide to make this a career
- Offer work experience during summer or for work study programs
- Target men changing careers

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (Whistleblower Protection) Affecting Child Care Centres

The Public Interest Disclosure Act came into effect to protect those who report offences in the public service. In October 2007, public sector bodies or organizations that receive more than 50 per cent of their operating funds from the provincial government are now covered by the act. Many child care centres fall into the second category. Other types of agencies that also fall into this category include: housing services, licensed or approved residential-care facilities other than foster homes, and agencies providing day services for adults with mental disabilities.

The following are offences under the new law:

- an act or omission that is an offence under an act or regulation (breaking the law)
- an act or omission that creates a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of persons or the environment (not including dangers that are normally part of an employee's job)
- gross mismanagement, including mismanaging public funds or a public asset (government property)
- knowingly directing or advising someone to commit any offence described above



Agencies now covered under the act are required to identify a designated officer to handle disclosures and investigations, explain the act to employees, set up procedures to handle disclosures and investigations and fulfill annual reporting requirements. Under the act, employees may report an offence to their immediate supervisors, designated offices in the employee's organization or directly to the Office of the Ombudsman.

For smaller organizations, the Office of the Ombudsman can serve as the designated officer if they apply for and are granted an exception. An organization may be considered small if there are 10 or less employees, including both employees and board members. Most child care centres are not eligible for the exception. For more information, please visit www.manitoba.ca/csc/whistlelinks; or call 1-204-945-6722 in Winnipeg.

Board Governance Initiative

Grants are available in 2007/2008 to support innovative new approaches to board governance. Boards of directors of licensed, non-profit child care centres can receive funds to help with planning, development or implementation of alternative governance models for child care in their communities.

Some ideas for board governance structures include:

- one board of directors overseeing a number of child care centres (ex: three existing boards governing three centres becomes one board governing the three centres)
- one board of directors oversees a centre, plus a number of family child care homes (ex: a child care centre board also supports services in child care by offering resources, such as a toy library, playground access and professional development opportunities to local family child care homes)
- one board for all child care centres in a community or region, similar to a school board
- one board oversees a number of resources for children and families in the community (ex: child care, immigrant supports, family counseling, parenting courses and employment services)

Proposals must be submitted by December 1, 2007 to MCCP, 219-114 Garry Street, Winnipeg, R3C 4V6.

An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

Health & Safety

Handle with Care.

Strategies for Promoting the Mental Health of Young Children in Community-Based Child Care

Handle with Care is a project that grew out of the Early Childhood Care and Mental Health Project carried out by the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre.

Within this child care context, mental health promotion is viewed as the development of age-appropriate and culturally relevant life skills that benefit all children's social and emotional development.

Eighty-one childcare centres in Canada (six in Manitoba) participated in gathering the information that eventually became the *Handle with Care* booklet. This is a resource for staff working in child care centres and found at:

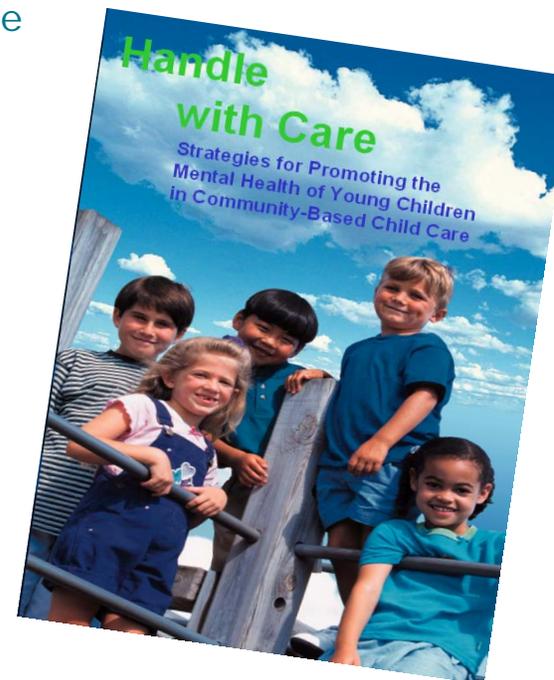
www.hincksdellcrest.org/institute/documents/FinalENGLISHBooklet13.pdf

"The purpose of the project was to explore ways that the mental health of young children can be promoted in community-based child care settings."

The booklet outlines nine building blocks that can positively affect the mental health of children in child care settings:

- develop trust between teacher and child
- build and ensure children's self-esteem
- express emotions
- relate to other children
- respect diversity
- handle change
- relate to parents
- ensure well-being of childcare providers
- create a healthy environment

The Canadian Mental Health Association (www.cmha.ca), promotion includes activities to improve mental health by focusing on enhancement of well-being, self-control and self-efficacy. These are all characteristics that help build what are sometimes called "protective factors". Mental health promotion can also include strategies to reduce risks such as poverty, violence and neglect. As child care providers, we may not be able to eliminate these risks. We can however, help children develop



their self-worth and communication skills. This will help them deal with problems and changes and set the stage for optimal psychosocial and cognitive development within the child care setting.

Next spring, the Manitoba Child Care Association is hosting a Handle with Care training workshop for child care providers. It will offer a variety of tools and strategies for everyday interactions with children and their families to promote mental health. For more information, contact Laurie McPherson at lmcperson@wrha.mb.ca or call 204-940-6652.





Cover Your Cough

Preventing Illness

Flu season is fast approaching and you need to protect yourself from getting the flu or from transmitting it to others. Prevention is extremely important because people often do not have any symptoms for days, but are still contagious.

The most common illnesses in children are respiratory infections, such as colds, croup, strep throat and ear infections. Younger children are at a greater risk because they haven't yet developed immunity to most infections. Children are in close proximity in child care settings, and infants and young children frequently put toys in their mouths, which increases the spread of germs. It is essential to regularly clean and sanitize toys, surfaces and objects that come in contact with children. It is also very essential to teach proper hand washing.

Manitoba Health recommends that children be immunized and that their immunizations be kept current. This practice will significantly reduce their risk of getting certain illnesses.

Breaking the Chain of Infection

Germs spread from one person to another through direct or indirect contact, airborne, or droplet contamination.

The chain of infection has four links:

- germs (such as a virus or bacteria)
- host (the person who is sick)
- vehicles of transmission (anything that can be contaminated by germs and passed on, such as toys, food or hands)
- New host (the person at risk/susceptible to get sick)

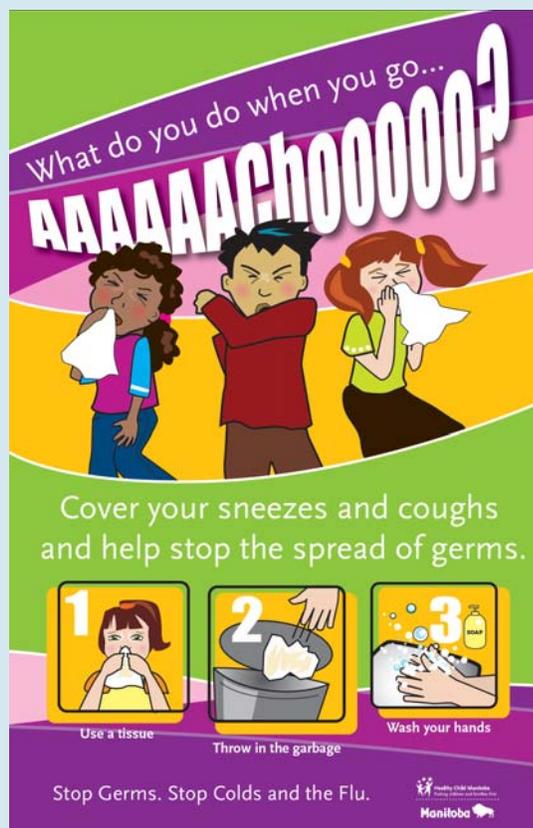
We can prevent the spread of germs by breaking one of the links in the chain. Germs can survive for hours, even days, significantly increasing the risk for infection. People are most contagious before they feel symptoms of illness, so prevention is important. Hand washing is the best way to prevent the common cold.

Germs are spread when we cough or sneeze without covering our mouths and noses. Droplets travel through the air, and can either be breathed in or land in a person's nose, mouth or eyes, causing infection. Covering our mouth and nose is another important part of prevention.

If you have to cough, use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose, throw the tissue into the garbage and wash your hands immediately, using proper hand washing procedures. A better alternative is to cough into your elbow or sleeve, decreasing the risk of spreading germs and the need to wash your hands.

For more information, see the Manitoba Child Care Program's *Infection Control Guidelines for Early Learning and Child Care* distributed to providers this fall.

Adapted from *Well Beings: A Guide to Promote the Physical Health, Safety and Emotional Well-Being of Children in Child Care Centres and Family Day Care Homes* by Canadian Paediatric Society (1996, 2nd edition), *Healthy Foundations in Child Care* (2000, 2nd edition) by Barbara Pimento and Deborah Kernersted and *Manitoba Health: Infection Control Guidelines for Community Shelters and Group Homes* at: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/fs/infcontshelter.pdf





An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

Growing Interest in Natural Playgrounds

Playgrounds in child care centres across Manitoba are changing. Large metal and plastic climbing structures are no longer focal points. Centres are developing interesting, safe outdoor areas where children can see, feel, smell and hear nature; experience how outdoor creatures live and plants grow. They also include shared sitting spaces under shade trees or hiding spots, behind bushes and tall grass.

The growing interest in more natural, less-structured play areas was evident at the first meeting of the Nature Education Support Group in September (hosted by Discovery Children's Centre). Over 100 early childhood educators, naturalists and landscape architects attended the meeting. Participants heard how Discovery Children's Centre decided to develop an outdoor playground where children can enjoy and explore nature.

Proponents say natural playgrounds contribute to the overall physical, cognitive and emotional development of children. Natural play environments are said to help children's concentration and self-discipline. Children who use them experience more diverse play, exhibit less aggressive behaviour, strive toward advanced motor fitness and become healthier. In addition to functioning as great outdoor classrooms, natural play spaces can reduce playground injuries, offer higher play value at a lower cost and help the green movement.

Discovery Children's Centre turned an unused field next to the centre into an adventure playground. They planted over 70 trees and shrubs; built a hill and tunnel; established a tall grass prairie area; and set up a vegetable and butterfly garden. Using drift wood, hay bales, tree logs and sand as finishing touches, they created a place where children love to play.

Ashworth Children's Centre is good example of a natural playground developed in a small area. With the help of a landscape architect, they designed a playground with grass, a large sand area and many trees, shrubs and flowers. It's been a great success, says Michele Henderson, director. The gardens spark many teaching moments and she sees more co-operative play among the children.

Other centres with natural playgrounds are Seven Oaks Child Day Care Centre, Winkler Day Care Centre, Charlie Brown Day Care Centre (Ste. Rose Du Lac), St. Maurice Daycare Inc., Lakeview Children's Centre (Langruth), Sadok Veselka Daycare and Cornish Child Care Centre.



Ashworth Children's Centre

For information on natural play spaces see: World Forum Foundation's website www.worldforumfoundation.org/wf/nacc/index.php or toll free 1-800-221-2864.

For information on Nature Education Support Group, to be added to a mailing list, or to request a video contact Ron Blatz at rblatz@discoverycc.com or call 204-889-2689 in Winnipeg. The next Nature Education Support Group is scheduled for November.



An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

Upcoming Events

2007/2008 Subsidy Orientations for Child Care Providers

Location: 114 Garry Street, Winnipeg
Boardroom 110,
November 13, 2007 - 1:30 and 7:00 p.m.
November 19, 2007 - 1:30 p.m.
May 6, 2007 - 1:30 and 7:00 p.m.
May 7, 2007 - 1:30 p.m.

2007/2008 Orientation Sessions from Child Care Co-ordinators

Location: 114 Garry Street, Winnipeg

Family Child Care I -
Boardroom 108,
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
November 15, 2007;
December 20, 2007;
February 21, 2008;
March 20, 2008;
May 15, 2008;
June 19, 2008

Family Child Care II -
Boardroom 108,
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
November 1, 2007;
December 6, 2007;
February 7, 2008;
March 6, 2008;
May 1, 2008;
June 5, 2008

Child Care Centre -
Boardroom 110,
1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
October 18, 2007;
February 28, 2008;
May 22, 2008

Board of Directors -
Boardroom 110,
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
November 8, 2007;
February 14, 2008;
May 8, 2008

Recommended Reading for Natural Playgrounds

Landscapes for Learning: Creating Outdoor Environments for Children and Youth

by Sharon Stine; John Wiley & Sons publishing, 1996, ISBN: 0471162221

This provides details on how to create environments that put young people in touch with their surroundings while providing stimulating, educational, safe place to play. It contains a wealth of case studies which demonstrate projects that work, describe design concepts and offer designers ideas to incorporate into their own projects.

Greening School Grounds: Creating Habitats for Learning

edited by Tim Grant and Gail Littlejohn; New Society Publishers, 2001, ISBN: 978-0865714366

North American schools are taking a critical look at their grounds and the enormous potential for transforming them into a diversity of exciting natural spaces for learning and play. This collection of articles from North America's leading environmental education magazine, brings together the best strategies for school-ground renewal.

Hollyhocks and Honeybees: Garden Projects for Young Children

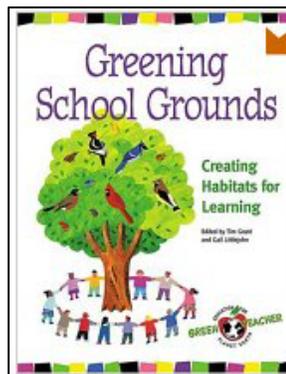
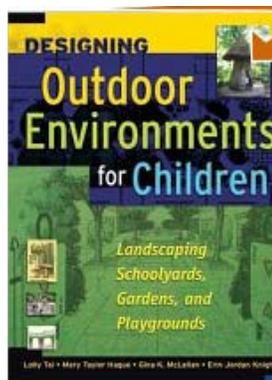
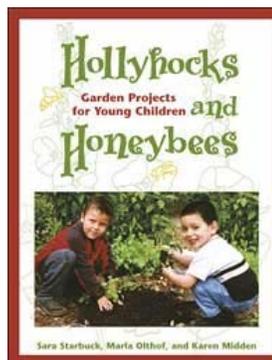
by Sara Starbuck, Marla Olthof and Karen Midden; Redleaf Press, 2002, ISBN: 978-192961020-4

Gardening can provide a full curriculum with language, literacy, science, math, social sciences and the arts. This book discusses everything you need to know about planning, preparation, plant selection, growing zones and pest control. The authors also show how gardening can be incorporated into learning centers, circle times, and field trips, and provide ways to document children's learning.

Designing Outdoor Environments for Children

by Lolly Tai, Mary Taylor Hague, Gina K McLellan and Erin Jordan Knight; McGraw-Hill Professional, 2006, ISBN: 978-0071459358

This unique resource details the design, installation and maintenance of sustainable children's landscapes and play yards. Numerous case studies cover projects including storybook courtyards, music and barnyard gardens, nature trails, wildlife habitats, memorial and edible gardens.



Child Care Subsidy : Tips and Reminders

Subsidy Approvals

- Subsidies are not approved until facilities and parents have received their approval letters showing the start date, end date, family contribution and name of the approved facility.
- Subsidy approvals are not transferable from facility to facility. Applicants must contact their subsidy advisors when transferring facilities and for approval of the new facility.

Until facilities have the approval letters, they should bill parents the full child care fees. This practice ensures parents do not mistakenly think their subsidies are approved because they have submitted the paperwork.

Remember: subsidies can only be backdated to the first day of the four week reporting period before the reporting period in which the application is received.

If you know families struggling with language barriers who may not understand their approval letters and/or expiry letters, please inform the subsidy advisor.

Special Needs

If you have received an approval for special needs as the reason for care but have not seen a family plan completed by the social worker or public health office, please contact that agency to request a copy.

Policy on Payments

The policy on timelines for submitting payment reports is:

- All reports are to be submitted to the subsidy advisor by the end of the second week of the next reporting period and must be received no later than 30 days after each reporting period has ended.

The policy on timelines for submitting adjustments to the Facility Payment Summary is:

- After a subsidy advisor has completed the Facility Child Attendance Report, a subsidy payment is authorized and a Facility Payment Summary is issued to the facility.
- After receiving the Facility Payment Summary, it is important for child care providers/directors to compare subsidy payments with the original attendance report submitted. Any discrepancies must be reported to the subsidy advisor no later than the end of the reporting period following the one in which the Facility Payment Summary was issued. All necessary adjustments can then be processed.



Regional Updates

Subsidy Advisors

Bibiane Labossiere is now acting supervisor for Child Care Subsidy in the Winnipeg office and can be reached at 945-2674 in Winnipeg; or toll free at 1-877-587-6224.

Kathy Brooks is now acting director for Provincial Services in Winnipeg and can be reached at 945-6854; or toll free at 1-877-587-6224.

Milena King (Boulanger), subsidy advisor in Westman has returned from maternity leave.

Sherry Wilner, subsidy advisor in Winnipeg has retired.

Child Care Co-ordinators

Anissa Dawson, Thompson region, is on maternity leave until April 2008.

Ann Rundle is covering her position, part time. Ann can be reached at 677-7275 in Thompson.



An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

Le crée

A support for francophone families and caregivers

Le Créé mini centres (Les mini - centres du Cree) encourage parents and caregivers in supporting children's francophone development by speaking and reading to them in French.

They offer francophone programs and services across Manitoba through Les mini-centres du Créé. French services include:

- French book and toy lending library with games, magazines, DVDs, music for infant to school age children
- family events
- playgroups and nursery school programs
- home visits for new parents
- literacy resources and programs
- parent workshops
- information and referral services for parents and caregivers
- website and online resource catalogue

Le Créé research shows that in a predominantly anglophone setting, bilingual couples must emphasize the weaker or more fragile of the two languages in their environments to ensure their children develop balanced bilingualism.

Parents and caregivers can also ensure children:

- listen to French music
- watch French movies
- participate in French language activities
- use French language resources such as magazines, software and games
- have opportunities to learn and know French language and culture



Anglophone parents whose partners are francophone can promote these activities to show their children how much they value the French language and culture.

Les mini-centres du Créé are located in Île-des-Chênes, La Broquerie, Laurier, Saint-Boniface, Saint James, Saint-Laurent, Saint-Lazare, Saint-Norbert, Saint-Pierre-Jolys, Sainte-Agathe and Sainte-Anne. Other centres will be opening soon in Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Lorette, Saint-Claude, Saint-Georges, Saint-Jean-Baptiste and Shilo.

For more information on le Créé, call 204-237-9666 in Winnipeg; or toll free 1-888-666-8108.

Staff changes at the Manitoba child care Program

After many years of dedicated service, **Lynda Rosenstock**, assistant director for the Manitoba Child Care Program (MCCP), retired. **Margaret Forniuk** is the new assistant director, MCCP Program Development, Compliance and Qualifications and brings comprehensive knowledge of child care to her new position. She has 25 years' experience in child care - 22 with government as a child care co-ordinator and policy analyst.

Elin Ibrahim is now MCCP's quality enhancement co-ordinator. Elin was an early childhood education instructor at Red River College. Before joining MCCP, Elin was project leader of the Manitoba Child Care Association's feasibility study into accreditation and chaired the Child Care Education Program Approval Committee (CCEPAC).

Ruth Gregory has been seconded to Winnipeg South Technical College as a recognition of prior learning co-ordinator for a year. **Carla Kernersted** will take on Ruth's policy analyst position for a year.

Cees deVries is manager, New Initiatives/Communications. Cees has worked extensively with the MCCP as a policy analyst for Services for Persons with Disabilities and has overseen multi-media projects for the government.

Tracey Lewis is the new planning co-ordinator at MCCP. She brings extensive experience in research and evaluation, public education and community volunteer work. Tracey has worked in a research unit in the Department of Sociology at the University of Manitoba.