



THEME 3

Diversity

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Related survey items

- This program is welcoming to the diverse groups of people who live in this community. (Basic Survey #6)

Related family support principle

- Family support programs promote relationships based on equality and respect for diversity.

Reflecting and celebrating diversity

It is a principle of family support to develop relationships based on equality and respect for diversity (Malcolmson, 2002). Family resource programs put this principle into practice in their activities, structures and staff. In order for a program to be deemed fully successful, it must be responsive to the uniqueness and the diversity of its community context.

Organizations require an understanding of culturally different clients in order to effectively meet their needs (McPhatter & Ganaway, 2003; Ochocka et

al, 2001). It is important for workers to possess the skills of understanding and appreciating different backgrounds, traditions, perspectives, beliefs, communication styles and languages (Hains, Lynch, & Winton, 2000). Diversity must be considered in any program's purpose, activities, structure, staff members, curriculum development and evaluation. The organization's vision, mission, policies, procedures, language, norms and brochures also need to reflect an organizational culture that honours diversity (Ontario Early Years Network, 2004). Staff can contribute toward further equity among all community members through collaboration with families and community providers (Hains, Lynch, & Winton, 2000).

Competence in working with diverse populations can lead to positive outcomes for the program and for participants. For example:

- A program that can respond effectively to the diversity of its families and children will be more successful overall, being able to serve more families, as well as increasing the satisfaction of diverse families with the organization's services (Kellerman, 1996)
- Sensitivity to new immigrant families will have a lasting effect on the families' willingness to access services (Peters, 1993)
- Family resource programs can be places where children learn early about the richness

of diversity (Kellerman, 1996)

- It is more likely that the program will develop a positive image in the broader community when it aims to provide equal opportunities for service to all of the community's families (Ontario Early Years Network, 2004)
- Social capital building is also an offshoot of working with diversity among families (Murphy-Kilbride, 2000).

Staffing considerations

Ideally, workers in organizations that serve families represent a wide range of cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, reflective of the community of service (Hains, Lynch, & Winton, 2000). In addition, workers may benefit from diversity training in how to create a welcoming atmosphere for all participants, including those whose upbringing is not North American or Western European, those whose first language is not English, people with disabilities and others with diverse needs and interests. For example, it is often necessary to take more time and to pay attention to how questions are worded when gathering information from these families. Family support practitioners must recognize "that the families' home routines may differ from those of mainstream families ... family priorities and goals for the child may vary from those of the early intervention or early childhood special education professionals" (Chen, 2001, no pagination). As well, interpreters may be required.

Reflecting diversity in programs

In addition to having staff with diverse backgrounds, there are many simple ways in which centres can demonstrate their awareness of and respect for the diversity of Canadian society. For example, the selection of toys, musical instruments, posters, artwork and dress-up clothes can reflect the diversity of the local community and the breadth of the Canadian mosaic (Kellerman, 1996; Chen & MacAulay, 1999). Parent-child activities can include the use of songs

from different cultures at Circle Time and celebration of special holidays throughout the year. Introducing and sharing favourite foods from other cultures is another way to honour the diversity of participants.

In sum, by valuing diversity, family resource programs become more open and creative in solving problems (Easley, 2001), staff performance improves (Plummer, 2003) and their programs are more able to meet the needs of the changing populations in communities.

Annotated References

Chen, D. (2001). *Visual Impairment in Young Children: A Review of the Literature with Implications for Working with Families of Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds*. Technical Report #7. California State University, Northridge. Retrieved December 15, 2005 from <http://www.clas.uiuc.edu/techreport/tech7.html#d>

This report reviews the literature concerning services to young children with visual impairment (including those with other disabilities) and makes suggestions for working with families of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It also presents practical tips and assessment questions, with an emphasis on understanding the family's perspective. For example, it recommends including toys that respect the family's culture, income level and lifestyle.

Kellerman, M. (1996). *Reflecting our communities: A handbook on ethnocultural diversity in family resource programs*. Health Canada.

This manual describes issues for consideration in trying to become a more culturally inclusive family resource program. Providing practical promising practices and tips, this manual describes issues and recommends actions to help family resource programs become culturally responsive to their communities.

McPhatter, A. R., & Ganaway, T. L. (2003). *Beyond the rhetoric: Strategies for implementing culturally effective practice with children, families and communities*. *Child Welfare*, LXXXII (2), 103-124.

McPhatter and Ganaway (2003) discuss the importance of cultural competence for organizations that serve children and families, particularly child welfare agencies. They propose a theoretical framework for assessing an organization's readiness for change regarding increased cultural competence and make recommendations for increasing culturally effective practice within these organizations. They suggest an assessment of both staff and the organization, including an examination of organizational, inter-professional and individual barriers to culturally competent practice with families.

Ochocka, J., Janzen R., Anisef, P. & Murphy-Kilbride, K. (2001). *Study of parenting issues of newcomer families in Ontario*:

Introduction to Final Reports. Kitchener, ON: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services and Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement. Retrieved December 15, 2005 from http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_print.asp?doc_id=1002688

These seven reports provide results from a large-scale qualitative study of immigrant parenting and community parenting support in three Ontario cities. The *Report on Literature Review and Bibliography* by Hatton and Bacic examines the critical issues and challenges facing immigrant parents. The values and parenting styles of newcomers add to the diversity in their neighbourhoods. In the remaining reports, the researchers describe their findings. They found families felt the need for additional support in the areas of education, language support (English learning and translation), culture, first language and religion. Also apparent was the need for more services such as extracurricular activities for children, family housing and employment-related supports which required collaboration among service providers and funders and culturally appropriate services within the community. Parents required practical parenting courses, assistance with child care, specific parenting support and holistic family support.

Ontario Early Years Network (2004). *Achieving cultural competence.* Toronto: Ontario Early Years.

This practical manual provides a list of cultural competence standards and practice guidelines for Ontario Early Years staff. It also includes a checklist of items for staff members to assess their own personal cultural competence level and suggests steps to improve knowledge, skills and understanding of cultural competence.

Plummer, D. L. (Ed.) (2003). *Handbook of diversity management: Beyond awareness to competency based learning.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

The *Handbook of Diversity Management* is an edited book of skills, theory and issues for those working toward increasing the diversity competence of their organization. It provides a current overview of diversity management and is a practical resource for organizations wanting to become welcoming to diverse populations.

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Chen, D. (2001). *Visual Impairment in Young Children: A Review of the Literature With Implications For Working With Families Of Diverse Cultural And Linguistic Backgrounds.* Technical Report #7. California State University, Northridge. Retrieved December 15, 2005 from <http://www.clas.uiuc.edu/techreport/tech7.html#d>

Chen, P. & MacAulay, J. (1999) *Improving Facilities: Innovative approaches for community programs.* Ottawa: Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs.

Cross, E. Y. (2000). *Managing diversity: The courage to lead.* Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Easley, C. A. (2001). Developing, valuing and managing diversity

in the new millennium. *Organization Development Journal*, 19 (4), 38-50. Retrieved December 13, 2005, from Proquest database.

Hains, A. H., Lynch, E. W. & Winton, P. J. (2000). *Moving towards cross-cultural competence in lifelong personnel development: A review of the literature.* Champaign, Illinois: Early Childhood Research Institute on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services. Retrieved February 22, 2006 from <http://clas.uiuc.edu/techreport/tech3.html#culture>

Kellerman, M. (1996). *A handbook on ethnocultural diversity in family resource programs: Reflecting our communities.* Health Canada.

Malcolmson, J. (2002). *Putting the pieces together: A conceptual framework of family support practice.* Ottawa: FRP Canada.

McPhatter, A. R. & Ganaway, T. L. (2003). Beyond the rhetoric: Strategies for implementing culturally effective practice with children, families and communities. *Child Welfare*, LXXXII (2), 103-124.

Murphy-Kilbride, K. (2000). *A Review of the Literature on the Human, Social and Cultural Capital of Immigrant Children and Their Families with Implications for Teacher Education*, CERIS working paper No. 13. Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement - Toronto. Retrieved February 5, 2006 from http://ceris.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/education/WK%2013_Kilbride.pdf

Ochocka, J., Janzen R., Anisef, P. & Murphy-Kilbride, K. (2001). *Study of parenting issues of newcomer families in Ontario: Introduction to Final Reports.* Kitchener, ON: Centre for Research and Education in Human Services and Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement. Retrieved December 15, 2005 from http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_print.asp?doc_id=1002688

Ontario Early Years Network (2004). *Achieving cultural competence.* Toronto: Ontario Early Years.

Peters, R. (1993). Increasing the responsiveness of mainstream mental health services to ethnocultural minorities. In R. Masi, L. Mensah, & K. McLeod (Eds.), *Health and cultures: Exploring the relationships, programs, services and care*, pp. 187-203. Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press.

Plummer, D. L. (Ed.). (2003). *Handbook of diversity management: Beyond awareness to competency based learning.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Schauber, A. C. (2001). Effecting extension organizational change toward cultural diversity: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Extension*, 39(3). Retrieved December 15, 2005 from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2001june/ent.html#a1>

This literature summary is one of ten that have been prepared in conjunction with the FRP Canada e-Valuation project. Each literature summary addresses a theme or indicator from the Participant Survey or Staff and Volunteer Survey.

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