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WHAT IS THE FAMILY SUPPORTS INSTITUTE ONTARIO?

The Family Supports Institute Ontario is a new organization that will promote family friendly policy, research and provide opportunities for professional development. Its primary goal is to develop capacity amongst family support practitioners who work in a variety of settings across the province of Ontario. Using the Metro Association of Family Resource Programs and the Ontario Association of Family Resource Programs as its foundation, the Family Supports Institute Ontario will bring together practitioners working in Family Resource Programs, (FRPs), Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC), Community Action Programs for Children and Canada's Prenatal Nutrition Programs (CAPC/CPNP) to name a few.

Membership Rates

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE
Entire organization/agency budget	
Under \$149,000	\$100
\$150,000 –\$249,000	\$200
Over \$250,000	\$300
Individual Friends and Supporters	\$80
Full-time students	\$25

Membership Form

Name _____

Home Address _____

City _____ Postal Code _____

Agency or School _____ Address _____

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Telephone: Home _____ Business _____

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Signature _____ Date _____

Please send all mailings to: my home address my business address receipt please

Cheques should be made payable to Family Supports Institute Ontario

Mail to: Family Supports Institute Ontario 55 Mary Street West, Suite 106, Lindsay, Ontario K9V 5Z6

Ontario Connections welcomes your input. For publications dates/submission deadlines, please email kevin.fsio@rogers.com. Due to time and space restrictions, we are not always able to publish all articles submitted – others may be edited for length and/or content. We do value all contributions and encourage you to continue to participate by sending us your information, articles and responses. The opinions expressed are those of the individual author(s) and not necessarily those of the Family Supports Institute Ontario.

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BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

- Shape the research agenda in the province and be “in the know” on the latest research initiatives and findings.
- Receive member-only savings of up to 20% on our capacity building workshops and knowledge fairs.
- Members only early bird savings for our biennial provincial conference.
- Establish a dialogue in support of family-friendly policies through our policy development team.
- Networking opportunities within local chapters.
- Relevant and timely E- news blasts.
- Quarterly newsletter.
- First choice on career development opportunities.
- Access to tools of the trade, code of ethics and occupational standards.
- Being connected and having fun!

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www.fsio.ca

**Research Surprise:
Parents/Caregivers on the
Right Track**

By Brenda Smith-Chant, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology,
Trent University

What do parents and caregivers need to know about child development? In some ways, I think there is far too much information about parenting out there! It fills large sections of bookstores and libraries, entire hour-long daily shows spout it out and a vast array of magazines are devoted to it. We are overloaded with parenting information—however; many of us feel that in spite of this mass of information (or maybe because of it) we are knowledge-poor. We feel confused about what we should be doing with our children and what constitutes ‘good parenting’. The current findings from genetics, biology, psychology, and other sciences are changing our view of the role of parents and caregivers; underscoring and clarifying the crucial role they play in preparing a child for life.

Scientific thinking about the role of parents and caregivers has been dramatically impacted by recent discoveries such as the International Genome Project. A few years back, scientists planned to map human DNA—the blueprint inside our cells

that is used to guide the every aspect of our biology. It was impressive! The idea was that once they mapped the human genome, they would understand the origin of many inherited aspects of our behaviour. That included everything from skin colour to intelligence, from our likelihood of male-pattern baldness to our desire for adventure. DNA researchers anticipated that the human genome would be amazingly complex, reflecting the intricacies of the human biology. The results have been even more shocking than anyone anticipated.

What was the big surprise? It turns out that there are only 20,000 to 25,000 genes in the human genome. Why is this surprise? This is only five times as many as the average bacteria, or three times as many as your garden-variety earthworm. When you realize that the blueprint-instructions for a human must include everything from how our heart is constructed, the shape of our face, eyes, digestive system—there just isn’t nearly enough genes to encode the complex mechanisms of a human! Right now our

genome is starting to look like those vague instructions from those mega-furniture stores—not nearly enough specifics to do a good job. Where are the rest of the ‘instructions’?

What we are beginning to understand is that many of the instructions required to ‘build’ a human child don’t need to be encoded into our genes. Nature only NEEDS part of the instructions—the rest come from the environment. Only the essential elements are encoded into the genes. For example, our biology prepared us to take in food by providing infants with the sucking reflex at birth. We support further development feeding ability by actually bringing the food to the infant and assisting them to suckle, nurse, and burp. Later, we will help them take in solid food and learn to use eating tools and to cook. Parents and caregivers complete what nature starts.

As a result of this environmental support for development, infants can be born at an early stage of their development. This is very different from a young earthworm, which enters the



To sum it up

Parents and caregivers should be aware first, they are an essential part of a child's development. Second, the things that they find enjoyable to do with their infants, like cooing, singing, touching, rocking, and smiling are nature's method of encouraging them to do things that are good for developing the infant brain. Having fun, face-to-face with your infant isn't just FUN – it is essential for their brain development.

world very able to take care of itself. Infant brains are not finished growing (that will take many more years) and they are helpless (they cannot move, feed themselves, take care of their most basic functions). By caring for an infant, parents and caregivers are actually FINISHING what nature has only started. In the earliest stages of development, parents and caregivers actually help to shape the development of a child's brain. This is a heavy responsibility, but one that adults are designed to accomplish with relative ease, by both our nature and our traditional childcare techniques that evolved together over thousands and thousands of years.

One important way that nature has helped the developmental process is

by ensuring that humans are almost compelled to interact with infants in a way that supports their development.

One method is that adults are designed to find interacting with infants in important ways FUN. Humans engage more in activities that they enjoy than ones that are unpleasant (this is why sex and eating are designed to be pleasurable). Watch people around a small child—they are almost drawn into interacting with the infant (a little baby magnet). When the infant smiles, most adults cannot help but smile back, coo and babble, and make silly faces. Around a baby, many intelligent adults turn into babbling fools! This is not only engaging, cute baby behaviour—we now know that babies need to interact with other humans (especially

face-to-face) in order to develop the social and intellectual parts of their brain. By making this fun for the adults, nature has ensured that infants get lots of exposure to others. Nature has also provided other methods to ensure that an infant's needs for survival and development are met. Notably, a baby's cry is one of the most irritating sounds known to humans—it is designed to be and NEEDS to be. This means that most adults are then highly motivated to do anything to make it stop. Babies who don't cry may not get their needs met! Thus, the instructions for informing someone that you are hungry, tired, sleepy, or uncomfortable don't need to be encoded in the genetic code, just the instructions for crying!

From the Editor's Desk

Jude Tripp, Editor

The Spring *Ontario Connections* newsletter is privileged to bring you an informative article by Brenda Smith-Chant on the latest research surprise. It is really no surprise to any practitioner who has chosen the family support field of practice. Nor is it a surprise to parents who have instinctively interacted with their children from birth in a way that the research supports as adaptively fostering our youngsters' developing personhood. When you read this article, I'm sure you will applaud the validation of your practice as you continue to support the important role of

parents and caregivers in stimulating and informing the development of their children in the early years. Further substantiation of the parenting role, specifically that of dads and fathering role models is highlighted in this issue of *Ontario Connections* in the interview between Tim Paquette, Co-chair of the Father Involvement Initiative – Ontario Network (FSIO) and Kevin Adams, FSIO Executive Director. Be sure to read *Why Daddy Matters*, the name of this article and also the name of some exciting new training currently being piloted in Ontario by FII-ON.



The Kanata Research Park Family Centre

Full day learning and care in action

The Executive Director, Kevin Adams recently spent two hours in conversation with Kim Hiscott and Esther Seaman of the Kanata Research Park Family Centre, located in North Kanata just half an hour west of our nation's capital. His reason for visiting was to learn a little more about their pre-existing program of full day learning and care for four and five year olds in a child care setting.

Describe your program and why you believe it to be unusual.

Our Junior and Senior Kindergarten programs are unusual because the child remains in licensed day care while registered with the local school board. Early Childhood Educators meet and plan with the JK and SK teacher on a weekly basis. All teachers attend parent interviews three times per school year to report on each child's progress. The ECE teachers present a portfolio of the child's work with them and the JK/SK teacher presents the school board's report card. Our program has been going on for almost eight years. We've both been here since the beginning.

What if any, were your initial challenges?

We struggled to come up with proper terms in order to link Ministry established curriculum and our early childhood programs. The children would spend half of their day with each. We wanted to be sure that both portions of the child's day complimented and influenced each other in positive ways.

Were there any early indications of success?

We sensed an increased connection of the parents to this centre as a learning community. As a centre we saw how the 4 and 5 year old children raised the expectations of parents of younger children. Parents became aware of how we were documenting the development of their children and how this documentation anchored the program. That sense of confidence made the program very popular and raised the standard for the programs for our younger children.

At what point did you and the staff feel this combined program could work?

Right from the beginning. It's a no brainer.

As leaders, did you have any misgivings?

The only concern we had was that there was a person on site that you're not directly supervising.

Who supervises the JK/SK teacher who works at your centre?

The principal of our linked school. As director I sit on the interview team to select that teacher, but the final decision rests with the principal. The JK/SK teacher attends school staff meetings and professional development opportunities and she's invited to attend our staff meetings. Her attendance is optional.

What was the early parent reaction?

Very positive, and it continues to be. We have a waiting list of 800 children whose families want them to be here. Having to find 1/2 day care is extremely stressful for parents. This program solves that issue. Parents are extremely happy. Some of our parents could select a private school for their children in grade one. The majority of them choose the public school system.

What, if any, are the challenges in working with the local school board?

There are some challenges but we've been able to work them out. The initial motivation for the 4 and 5 year old combined program was space, or a lack of it for JK and SK students in the nearby schools. It took some time to fully understand the teacher federation structures, instructional and prep time issues and procedures around obtaining learning materials from the school board.

Are there similar programs elsewhere in the Ottawa Carleton Board?

There is another satellite program at the Algonquin College Family Centre which is directly linked to the school board like we are. There are other programs that use space at schools but they are not linked like we are.

What are the barriers to setting up similar programs throughout Ontario?

There are no reasons why these programs shouldn't happen. I love to see this combination of ECE and Teaching because they each have some missing pieces. The children are reaching their potential. They're excited and engaged about learning. If this became province-wide it would be accessible to every child. It would be the best start for everyone and the similar programs could trickle down to younger children of all ages.

What is the role of parents in expanding this program of full day learning and care across the province?

Their role is to share their story. They are helping us to gather information. Parents here are keenly involved and they tend to believe that this is the system that should be in place for all children.

Finally, how do you define family-centred support for learning and care?

It is the respect for parents as the child's primary teacher. They deserve to be well connected to their child's day. It is the understanding and being honest with parents about the limitations of group care. It is the knowing and believing that parents want to be connected to their child, their learning and their care.

CAPC/CPNP REPORT

By Joanne King, Chair, Ontario Coalition of CAPC/CPNP Projects

“Real Help, Right Here, Right Now”

The CAPC/CPNP Ontario Coalition is pleased to be able to offer all of the Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal CAPC/CPNP projects in Ontario the opportunity to attend a special National Project Fund (NPF) and Diabetes Training Symposium.

Spotlight on Family Health is a three day training event that is designed to provide a more in-depth and detailed training on the National Project Fund and Diabetes resources that were distributed last year.

This opportunity for training and skill development will allow projects to more successfully integrate these resources into effective action within their local communities.

Each project is invited to send two representatives (three for combined projects) to this symposium where there will be multiple opportunities to attend concurrent workshops on all of the resources. This format will allow participants to be trained on every resource and develop plans for implementation for

their own local community. At the same time there will be a chance for projects to share their own best practices and information on what has worked for them.

Through the generosity of the National Project Fund and the Canadian Diabetes Strategy there is no cost to participants.

We look forward to seeing as many people as possible in attendance on March 10, 11, and 12 in Toronto for this unique training and skill development opportunity.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



FRP Canada Conference Welcoming Communities

May 12 – 15, 2009

Crowne Plaza Niagara Falls – Fallsview

On-line registration is now open.

Visit www.frp.ca/welcomingcommunities

KEYNOTES:

Vital Communities, Vital Support: How well do Canada's communities support parents of young children?
Nancy Birnbaum, President & CEO, Invest in Kids, Toronto, Ontario

Family Support: The importance of HOW we provide it when building parent capacity
Carol Trivette, Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, North Carolina

The Neuroscience of Early Child Development
Stuart Shanker, York University, Toronto, Ontario

Join us in Niagara for the best conference yet.

WORKSHOPS: The full program will be posted on the website by January 5.

Topics include: capital campaigns, storytelling, political action towards abolishing physical punishment, confidence in immigrant families, team building, primary language and culture, ED's round table, healthy child development, "evidence", parenting programs – what really works, e-Valuation findings, toy libraries, best practices, relationship building and communities plus many more

FUN:

- Opening reception at the Hard Rock Club
- Tours of Niagara attractions and wineries on Wednesday evening
- Magic of Play on Thursday evening
- Walks by the falls – anytime

ANYTHING ELSE?

Pre-conference training sessions on Tuesday, May 12, 2009

Immerse yourself in a full day of training in the topic that interests you the most. Registration is limited. More information is available on www.frp.ca/preconference

1. Positive Discipline: What it is and how to do it?
2. Strategic Planning that Works
3. Care, Identity and Inclusion – Involving families in dialogues about strengthening their culture
4. Reaching Hard-To-Reach Families
5. Effective Co-Parenting: Putting Kids First



WELCOMING
COMMUNITIES
FRP CANADA
CONFERENCE
MAY 12 - 15, 2009

The months since our last newsletter have been busy for FSIO. At the risk of leaving something out, let's take a moment and bring everyone up to speed on recent events.

The Board of Directors of the Family Supports Institute Ontario met on December 4th and 5th in Toronto for two days of strategic planning. We reviewed the goals that were established when FSIO came into being in November 2007. We then compared them with the ambitious terms of our agreement with the Trillium Foundation of Ontario. Our Directors felt that in order to build on early successes we now needed to formalize our committee structure. Each committee's activities provide opportunities for committee members to develop their skills and expertise so that they, at some point, can be considered as candidates for vacant positions on the Board of Directors. You will find the committee names, people who are acting as links between Board and Committee and their contact information on our website. These committees are just beginning to build their membership. Now is the time to join. It is important to note that the contact people are not committee chairs, those positions will be determined at a later date.

One of FSIO key goals has been to carry out regional launches across Ontario. As a young organization we need to ensure that Early Years Centres, Family Resource programs, Best Start Hubs and indeed all practitioners in the field of family-centred care: hear about our work; consider becoming members of FSIO; provide us with feedback about our efforts; offer to become part of our action committees and explore the possibility of being a member of a regional team for Family Supports Institute Ontario.

While spring seems a long way off, this is the perfect time to remind our members that all memberships expire on March 31st. We are counting on all current members to renew their membership as we begin our second full year as the Family Supports Institute Ontario. Your membership gives you four newsletters per calendar year, reduced rates for our biennial conference and access to the members' only area of our website. Please renew as soon as possible and encourage other organizations to have a close look at what we do and join our growing group of family-centred practitioners.

And now, something exciting to look forward to in our *Ontario Connections*, Summer, 2009 newsletter:

The work of Dr. Stuart Shanker of York University is known to many, if not all, of our readers. Many of our readers were fortunate enough to have heard him present as the keynote speaker at our conference last September. As one of Canada's foremost researchers on post natal cognitive development, Dr. Shanker has much to offer practitioners in the field of family-centred care. FSIO's interview with him will appear in the summer, 2009 edition of *Ontario Connections*. We will be featuring other leaders in our field in future editions. Please be watching for them.

Kevin Adams
Executive Director

Resourceful Websites

Resourceful websites shared at the *Evolving Families... Evolving Professional Conference for Parent Educators and Family Support Professionals* on Nov. 14th in London, Ontario.

This conference was lead by Childreach in partnership with six other family support services. For more information contact Jane Powers at jpowers@childreach.on.ca

Dr. Peter Jaffe, Academic Director of the Centre of Research on Violence Against Women and Children's presented a workshop titled: The role of parents and the community in addressing the roots of violence. <http://www.crvawc.ca/> and www.lfcc.on.ca were websites he shared that provide information and resources regarding the impact of domestic violence on children and the impact of media violence. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZscS775ek8>. A must-watch video, Children See Children Do, was also a suggested link to view.

Susan Jack, RN, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing, McMaster University presented a workshop titled: From Opinion- Informed Practice to Evidence Based Practices

and shared these websites: www.excellence-jeunesenfants.ca contains an encyclopedia on early childhood development with 34 topics of key messages from evidence-based research to share with parents and providers.

<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCLAboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/EarlyChildhoodLearning> is the site of the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre that gathers and transfers leading scientific knowledge about the conditions that foster early childhood learning and development from conception to age five. It has information to share with parents and providers with topics of parenting skills, learning through play, language development, aggression, etc.

<http://www.eodp.ca/aboutuss1.php> Eastern Ontario Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) Network Incorporated. In some areas, the Corporation has granted funds to organizations offering family supports. There are six funding elements: Business Planning, Skills Development (training), Youth Interns, Local Initiatives, Community Capacity and Access to Capital. The website includes application guides and application forms for each element of interest. One of the successful candidates for funding was OEYC Haliburton Victoria Brock. For further information contact: judyrobbins@oeyc.ca



Why Daddy Matters

By Kevin Adams, Executive Director, Family Supports Institute Ontario

The **Father Involvement Initiative-Ontario Network (FII-ON)** began in 1997 when Health Canada commissioned a literature review in order to develop an action plan that would encourage father involvement in parenting with their children in Ontario. In a recent conversation, FII-ON's Co-chair Tim Paquette and FSIO'S Executive Director, Kevin Adams, looked back over the first ten years of the organization with a view to what's coming next for Ontario dads.

Our conversation began with the FII-ON's view of father involvement as a key element to child development and resiliency. One of the organization's earliest initiatives was to create and make available posters of fathers actively involved in parenting and two booklets by John Hoffman. More recently FII-ON working with its partners across the country has created "My Daddy Matters Because..." This three year study which began in 2002 was completed in 2005. "It was the culmination at the national level of what FII-ON had been doing at the local level" said Tim, "to identify resources, programs and services available to dads." <http://www.mydad.ca/final-report.php>

Since then Tim and his organization have continued to produce resources that support responsible father involvement. These are all available from their web site: <http://www.cfii.ca/fiion> as well as a comprehensive history, with

We talked about general trends in the area of Dads' involved with their families. Tim's optimism was refreshing. "Canadian dads are more involved than ever." However this is not reflective of public policy and delivery of services.

Like so many other groups, hoped-for change must come from the top with policies that promote and support father involvement. In the province of Quebec provincial legislation has made 'Daddy Days' a reality. In Quebec new dads can spend the first five or six weeks of their child's life at home with mom and baby – bonding, supporting and growing their new family together. The message in Quebec appears to be that the role of dad is valued from the start. "The success of that program is reflected," says Tim, "in the percentage of dads taking this kind of leave. In Quebec, 40 to 50 percent of dads are taking this time for their families compared to a national average of just 12 percent."

Children grow from father's involvement, but father grows as well.

statements of the organization's values, mission and vision. Their work has been funded primarily by creating projects which involved delivering training and workshops to interested groups and organizations both here in Ontario and often further afield. The challenge for FII-ON and so many other organizations that support families is that they are being asked to create more projects, services, resources and events while the necessary funds are not forthcoming.

Here in Ontario evidence of that kind of legislated support is harder to find. Where it can be found is at the family level. Here we find dad's involvement in many cases to be flourishing. In families where both partners work outside the house, the expectation for dad to take an active role in the household and child care duties far exceeds dad's role a generation ago. In turn we see dads modelling their involvement for their children and their



children 'get it'. Sadly it appears that services for dads and policy makers' efforts on the topic of Father Involvement have yet to catch up.

The discussion then turned to what comes next for dads in Ontario and for the Father Involvement Initiative-Ontario Network. "We have a national presence. We have lots to share on the work/family/balance issue. We'd like additional long term funding to allow us to create more resources for Dad and Mom. Fathers and mothers make an irreplaceable contribution to the life of a child. Children grow from father's involvement, but father grows as well. FII-ON's goal is to promote and be a catalyst for responsible father development." Tim said in closing.

FII-ON's website has been undergoing some upgrading. The new version will be ready shortly. It will be more accessible to dads and the greater community. Please be sure to have a look. Tim and his colleagues would welcome your feedback at: www.cfii.ca.

RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Family Supports Certificate

Spring is just around the corner! It is never too early to start planning for spring.

Gaining a Family Supports Certificate provides individuals with skills and knowledge to support families in a rapidly changing society. It gives you the opportunity to integrate your current practice with theory related to family supports, develop knowledge and skills needed for exemplary practice, and work collaboratively toward high-quality innovative programs.

COURSES OFFERED

Family Issues I, CVFS 401
Offered on campus, Tuesday and Thursday
May 05 – June 18

Family Issues II, CVFS 402
Offered on campus, Monday and Wednesday
May 04 – June 22

Program Planning and Evaluation, CVFS 404
Offered on-line
May 09 – August 08

Practicum/Project, CVFS 408
Offered on-line
May 09 – August 08

Group Dynamics and Interpersonal Communication, CVFS 400
Offered Monday to Saturday on campus
May 25 – May 30

For more information, contact Catherine Moher, Academic Coordinator, 416-979-5000 ext. 2535 or by email at cmoher@ryerson.ca

AWARDS, BURSARIES AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

If you need financial assistance to make tuition payments, you have a variety of options. You may apply or be nominated for merit-based awards and/or you may apply for need-based financial aid.

For more detailed information on financial aids and awards, please contact the Ryerson Student Financial Assistance office by telephone at 416-979-5113 or visit www.ryerson.ca/financialaid.