

What You Should Expect from Your Community and Government to Support Children, Youth and Families

The public has a responsibility to provide services and support to children, youth and families. Here's what you should expect from your community and your government. Never doubt that we as a society are capable of providing the necessary resources to support and equalize the playing field for children, youth and families.

A Strong Commitment to Early Childhood Development

There is a considerable amount of evidence-based consensus that public investment should be directed to community-based programs and services that support families and young children, but what does it mean to have comprehensive early childhood services in your community? Programs aimed at early childhood development (ECD) are varied, but include some of the following roles:

- ◆ To educate and support parents and reduce family isolation
- ◆ To deliver services to children
- ◆ To develop the capacities of caregivers and teachers
- ◆ To enhance the knowledge and practice of all of those who nurture young children

Some examples of these types of services include: Family Resource Centres, Family Places, drop-in centres, toy-lending libraries, licensed/regulated child care and preschool, and recreation programs. These can be facilitated in public schools, community centres, neighbourhood houses, early childhood centres, libraries, or other venues.

Support in Transitions from Childhood to Youth to Adulthood

Transitions for children and youth can be difficult times. A proper network of services and support can help ease children and youth through transitions and help mitigate the negative effects, resulting in happier, healthier adults. Programs aimed at supporting transitions include some of the following:

- ◆ To support teens transitioning from elementary to high school and post-secondary
- ◆ To reduce youth isolation
- ◆ To provide a "safe haven" for children and youth
- ◆ To support children and youth in foster care
- ◆ To foster a sense of ownership, pride, and connectedness to the community

These can be facilitated a variety of ways, including using public schools, community centres and other public spaces.

Increased Economic Equality

Ensuring income equality is one of the most important ways to improve the lives of children and youth. Programs aimed at increasing economic equality include some of the following roles:

- ◆ To lift families out of poverty
- ◆ To give low-income children and youth equal access to resources
- ◆ To provide employment upgrades and education

Safe and Caring Communities

A safe and caring community is essential for children and youth to flourish. Programs aimed at creating safe and caring communities include the following purposes:

- ◆ To promote youth engagement in all aspects of political life
- ◆ To provide public activities that build community, such as street festivals and celebrations
- ◆ To improve and promote safety

What resources does your community already have?

What resources are missing?

What will you ask government to do to support children and youth in your community?