

## **15 by 15: A Response from the Vancouver Coastal Region Early Years Framework Partners**

The Vancouver Coastal Region Early Years Framework describes a common vision, mission, principles and roles for the public and community based organizations that provide early years services in the Vancouver Coastal Region. The Framework was developed in the spirit that improving the well being and development of children across the Vancouver Coastal region is an obligation for all partners. On March 27, 2009 three regional partners (Vancouver Coastal Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development and United Way of the Lower Mainland) signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to implement the Framework. This commitment recognizes the Framework as a forum for the enhancement of partnerships, the expansion of collaborative practice opportunities and the development of an integrated service delivery approach.

As regional partners, we are concerned about all issues affecting the health and development of children in the Vancouver Coastal region. Thirty-two percent of kindergarten children were found to be developmentally vulnerable in the Vancouver Coastal region. The provincial government has established a provincial target to reduce childhood vulnerability to 15% by 2015 – a reduction of 50% from its current rate. This target demonstrates the government's recognition of the importance of the early years as a lifelong determinant of health and the role of government in supporting healthy child development. The 15 by 15 policy framework outlines a series of policy recommendations to promote the long term health and well being of our population, through strategic investments in early child development. The policy recommendations highlight the fact that supporting the health and development of children and families also requires addressing the social and economic situations of families. Addressing these situations provides an opportunity to improve outcomes in our population and reduce the health and social costs.

The report also notes that knowing where services and supports should best be placed is complicated by the fact that while there are high levels of vulnerability amongst children in the poorer areas of the region, 80% of the children who are vulnerable do not live in poor neighborhoods. Thus, there is a need for universal approaches to ensure all children receive the supports that are needed. The expansion of full day kindergarten is an important example of a universal service accessible to all families and is part of the 15 by 15 recommendations.

As partners of this Framework, we recognize that there are different approaches to reducing the number of vulnerable children in our region and view the Framework as an opportunity for engaging in dialogue towards solutions:

- “The 15X15 framework underscores the need for organizations to work collaboratively, providing an integrated continuum of child development and childcare services across our communities. The first years of a child's life lay the foundation for a strong future. Working with our partners we will continue to build a network of integrated services that support those early years”. *Beverly Dicks, Assistant Deputy Minister, Vancouver Coastal / Fraser Regions, Ministry of Children and Family Development.*
- Dr. Patty Daly, Chief Medical Health Officer for Vancouver Coastal Health, note: “We are pleased to see that health services and support for mothers and young children highlighted in this report. Activities like the Early Years Framework will lead to the integration of existing programs and services, as well as assist in monitoring children's development from birth through 18 months”. This emphasis on health promotion and early identification is an opportunity to reduce the future burden on our health care system”.
- “No one organization can achieve social change on its own,” says Michael McKnight, President and CEO of the United Way of the Lower Mainland, “ECD community and regional coalitions convene a range of stakeholders to engage in the ongoing cycle of research, planning, action, and evaluation. By including this work in their key policy recommendations, HELP highlights the integral role that these coalitions have in addressing the needs of young children, their families, and the communities in which they live.”

As regional partners, we acknowledge are committed to the health and well being of all children and families in the region. We have an obligation to identify and advocate for healthy public policies that can increase the health and

well being of all of our children and families. We are confident that much can be learned from other jurisdictions who have successfully addressed child poverty. As a successful partnership, providing leadership in the Vancouver Coastal region, we are committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to reduce the poverty rate for children and families.

# Early Years Framework

Vancouver Coastal Region



Ministry of  
Children and Family  
Development

