

Review of Speech-Language Services for Children and Youth in Alberta Communication Update – December 2006

As one of the priorities for the Alberta Children and Youth Initiative, a review of speech-language services was initiated in April 2004 and included an issues consultation, literature review, a pan-Canadian survey, and inventories of existing speech-language services across Alberta.

A number of key issues related to speech-language services for children and youth were identified, including the high demand for services; shortage of speech-language service providers; challenges with recruitment and retention; the need for more evidence based practice; the need to recognize the appropriateness of a range of services; challenges with coordination of services; and issues related to alternative and/or augmentative communication devices and technology for providing speech-language services.

Based on the review findings, the committees have developed a draft strategic approach for speech-language services for children and youth.

In the spring of 2005, the Student Health Initiative Partnership Forum and six regional focus groups provided stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss the process of the speech-language review and to validate the components of the draft strategic approach. Participants also suggested examples of strategies for implementation as potential next steps.

In December 2005 the strategic approach was approved by partnering Assistant Deputy Ministers.

The priority short term actions for the Implementation Plan for the Speech Language Services Review were approved by partnering Assistant Deputy Ministers and Deputy Ministers in 2006. These priority short term actions for 2006/2007 include the following:

1. An environmental scan to identify existing resources:

- Information on language development.
- Strategies to support the development of speech and language skills.
- Identification of cataloguing or creating an inventory of existing resources available to parents/caregivers and service providers to support the creation of language rich environments.

2. Develop an awareness initiative that builds on the information resources gathered in the environmental scan to:

- Identify and provide learning opportunities for families, caregivers and service providers to learn more about creating language-rich environments and supporting speech and language development, enrichment, and remediation.
- Inform parents and caregivers of children with speech-language needs, schools, physicians, and others about the range of interventions that may be appropriate for children and youth with speech-language needs, and their roles in supporting these interventions.

- Examine use of videoconferencing for professional development and mentorship purposes, and to enhance service provision to rural and remote communities.
- Promote the use of promising practices using differentiated service models including videoconferencing.

Literature Review

The literature review includes a summary of research findings about service delivery models, components of service delivery and professionals, para-professionals and parents involved in providing speech-language services to children and youth. This literature review is available on Alberta Health and Wellness' website <http://www.health.gov.ab.ca> (Professional Resources).

Final Report

Towards Sustainable Speech-Language Services for Alberta's Children and Youth: A Review of Speech-Language Services in Alberta is now available on the ACYI website – <http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/acyi/>. The final report includes: background information, results of the literature review, the pan-Canadian survey, service inventories, and the strategic approach to speech-language services for children and youth in Alberta.

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