

play + parenting

FRP Canada



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No Cost, in Dollars or Dignity

The first guiding principle of family support states that “Family support programs are open to all families, recognizing that all families deserve support.” For this reason, family resource programs make sure there is no financial barrier to participation in their activities. But even when activities are free, there can still be hidden barriers for families who have little money, as Corriene Murphy points out. She is a Family Resource Educator at the Kilbride to Ferryland Family Resource Centre Coalition, which has five locations on Newfoundland’s Avalon Peninsula. She puts it this way: “We aim for all our programs to have no cost, either in dollars or in dignity.”

Donations not solicited

Costs to people’s dignity can be subtle. For instance, Corriene explains why there is no donation box at the door in her Centre. “Some people might worry that others would notice if they never put anything into the tin,” she says. “Of course we accept donations, but they’re given discreetly in an envelope to staff members.” No one hears whether the donation is silent paper money or clinking coins.

The same thing goes for community celebrations. “We don’t ask people to bring any food to our Christmas celebration,” says Corriene. “We don’t want anyone

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to feel that their cupcakes aren’t as fancy as someone else’s.” Similarly, the Coalition Centres do not

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Children enjoy trying on the costumes from the Halloween exchange organized by the Kilbride to Ferryland Family Resource Centre Coalition.

Respecting Parents’ Experience

“Parents tell us that this course is different from other parenting courses they’ve taken,” says Jennifer Pearson, co-developer and trainer with Reaching In...Reaching Out (RIRO). She is referring to a pilot project she is currently working on under a grant from the Social Development Partnerships Program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Jennifer continues, “We aren’t telling parents they’re doing things wrong and trying to ‘correct’ them. We acknowledge the tough circumstances that many of them have to deal with, and we help them build on what they’re doing well so that they can do better. We’re always urging them to look for the strengths in themselves and in their children.”

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FRP Canada's Mission
National leadership that supports a vibrant network of family resource agencies.



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**FRP CANADA
CONFERENCE
APRIL 26-29, 2011**

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Montreal, QC

**Join us for FRP Canada's 2011
National Conference in
Montreal, April 26 to 29.**

**Early Learning,
and a whole lot more!**

- Connect with old friends and make new ones at the Tuesday night reception.
- On Wednesday and Thursday, attend presentations and workshops, offered in English and French, focusing on a broad range of approaches that enhance early learning and human development.
- After celebrating at the Magic of Play gala on Thursday night, come together for a thought-provoking plenary Friday morning.

Registration opens **online Nov. 1, 2010.**

Members: \$345 (\$395 after Jan. 31, 2011) Non-Members: \$450

Limited travel subsidies available for members.

www.frp.ca/conferenceMontreal

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lend their space for birthday parties. "It would cost people in dignity if they brought their child to a birthday party that was more elaborate than what they could do," Corriene observes. "Our organization doesn't want to be associated with that feeling."

Fun for free

Cost and sustainability are factors in planning the Centres' regular night out for parents. "We could buy supplies and do scrapbooking," Corriene says, "but it's an expensive hobby and many people couldn't keep it up. Instead, we do simple things, like play Trivial Pursuit using the game that is in our toy lending library. Or we have a relaxation night and do pedicures."

Clothing and costume exchange

The Coalition Centres run a clothing exchange which is open to all. "We

keep the clothes in a separate room, apart from the playroom," says Corriene. "That way people can 'shop' without feeling others are watching them."

When Hallowe'en costumes began showing up in the clothing donations, parents suggested organizing a costume exchange to help them reduce expenses. "We put up a notice around the beginning of October," Corriene recalls, "and set a date. We got about 40 costumes, from infant to six year olds, including some good quality fleece ones for cold weather. During playgroup, families went one at a time to select a costume. People brought whatever they had—it might just be a piece of a costume, like a hat or a bag—and everyone took what they wanted. You didn't have to bring a costume to go home with one. The leftovers went into our dress-up corner."

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality and privacy is an important part of supporting families' dignity. "We run Healthy Baby Clubs which are prenatal programs for mothers who are considered 'at risk,' says Corriene. "In fact, there are many factors that could constitute being 'at risk,' but some people have the attitude that 'you only go there if you're poor,' so we protect the privacy of participants by scheduling these activities at other times than our playgroups." This consideration may be more important in small centres than in the anonymity of the city.

No judgement

Corriene sums up this "no cost" approach by saying, "The important thing is that people can come here and not feel judged. We want everyone to keep their dignity and know that they're just as accepted as anyone else." □

Respecting Parents, continued from page 1

Resilient Parent—Resilient Kids

The course that Jennifer has been piloting, *Resilient Parents—Resilient Kids*, is part of an initiative launched by RIRO and its sponsor, the Child & Family Partnership. It builds on five years experience teaching RIRO's evidence-based resilience skills course to child care professionals. The aim is now to give parents access to the skills that will help them better deal with stress and adversity so that they are able to pass these skills on to their young children. It particularly targets vulnerable families and parents who are experiencing a range of hardships.

Thinking skills

The project will not be completed until 2012, but even in this initial

stage, feedback is already very positive. A typical comment from a parent is: "This has helped me step back and think and see. It's cut my anxiety in half." Central to the Reaching In...Reaching Out approach to resiliency is the recognition that our feelings, and therefore our actions, are influenced by the way we think about a situation. If we learn to recognize our thoughts, particularly our automatic thinking habits, we can see that there may be other ways to look at a situation. A new perspective can give us the flexibility to feel and act differently. "The idea is that parents can learn to respond instead of reacting," says Jennifer, "and that will lead to an improved relationship with their child." As another parent put it, "I learned not to jump to conclusions

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**Families
Connecting
Through Stories**

**National
Family Week**

October 4–10, 2010



Respecting Parents, continued from page 3

or think negative. I can teach my children how to deal with their problems by dealing with mine positive.”

Emotional skills

In order to take this step back to think about their thinking patterns, parents need to be in charge of their emotional life. Parents learn ways to bring their impulses under control. “We spend time in each session practising a relaxation technique like breathing and visualization,” explains Jennifer. “These techniques help parents become calm and focussed so they can model these skills to their children. Practising the techniques together also gives parents a break from the difficult aspects of their everyday life.”

An encouraging environment

“In *Resilient Parents—Resilient Kids*, we tell people this is information for you to take, use and let us know how it works for you,” Jennifer says. Throughout the teaching of the resiliency skills, parents are encouraged to bring forward their own issues in the group. The course material is then related to their real-life challenges. “We also make it clear that building resilience is a process,” Jennifer continues. “It’s not something people have to ‘get’ right away. We emphasize too that ‘mistakes’ are part of the process. Everybody makes mistakes; it’s how we learn... and that goes for both children and adults.” In such an encouraging environment, it’s no wonder that parents are able to learn skills to bounce back from adversity and take care of both themselves and their children. □

Resilient Parents – Resilient Kids is in the first year of a three-year development process to adapt and pilot a resiliency skills training program, including a video showing parents and children in resilience-building activities. Families participating in the pilot sites include those most vulnerable to multiple challenges, including Aboriginal and other families in Northern and remote communities, families led by lone and teen mothers, families with special needs children and families living in poverty.

The program will **not be available until 2012**, but already some resources for parents are posted on the Reaching In...Reaching Out website, including parent resource sheets on encouragement and problem solving and booklists of resiliency-related books for young children. For more information, go to www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-parents.htm .

Kudos to Our Members

“Kudos to Our Members” is a regular column which will feature your successes: accomplishments, awards, positive feedback about the contributions of your organization, your staff or volunteers. Let us know and we will share the good news.



Arlene Hache, Executive Director of the Centre for Northern Families in Yellowknife and Member of the Order of Canada.

Arlene Hache was admitted as a Member of the Order of Canada last fall in recognition of her work providing advocacy and support to women and families. She is one of the co-founders and the Executive Director of the Yellowknife Women’s Society/Centre for Northern Families, a member of FRP Canada since 1998.

Started in 1990 as a simple drop-in centre for women, the Centre has expanded under Arlene’s passionate leadership and now offers a broad range of services that support multi-stressed and marginalized families. It sponsors the Emergency Women’s Shelter, a drop-in medical clinic, a daycare, prenatal programs, family support programs, youth programs, social awareness, and advocacy. Arlene has also worked with other organizations to promote mental health and prevent family violence.



The Provincial Council of Manitoba Women honoured Sharon Taylor, Executive Director of Wolseley Family Place (WFP), with an award at its Celebrating Women Gala in 2009. In 1998, when Sharon started as Program Facilitator at WFP in Winnipeg, it was a half-day

drop-in program with two employees. She now leads an organization that has 32 employees and serves 3500 families, including many in vulnerable situations. Recognizing that families’ needs are multi-faceted, WFP offers programs from free breakfasts and cooking classes to discount clothing and doctor visits to addiction counselling and community services. Most of all, Sharon emphasizes that WFP is all about “believing that these women do know about their children. They just need support, as we all do.” FRP Canada is proud to have had Wolseley Family Place as a member since 1999. □

Vulnerable Families as e-Consumers

How easy is it for families to find product safety information on the Internet? Does having a low income or being a new immigrant pose added barriers? What would make it easier for people to find the information they need?

In the fall of 2009, FRP Canada, with money from Industry Canada, undertook a small exploratory and descriptive study entitled “**Vulnerable Families as e-Consumers: current attitudes, behaviours and barriers to e-information.**” The aim was to better understand how product safety information is accessed and used by three sub-groups of low-income families—two-parent; lone-parent female-led; and new immigrant.

Parents in four regions of Canada participated in a focus group and answered a survey. In addition, a sample of family resource practitioners completed a questionnaire. The study demonstrated that most parents in this sample are experimenting with the Internet to find product safety and other information related to family health. Many of the study participants were quite sophisticated in how they search for and use multiple sources to cross-reference information. However, language, technological and other barriers seem to persist.

Here are some interesting findings:

- About **three-quarters of those surveyed** have a home computer with Internet access.
- These families view having Internet service as a necessity in today’s environment, but also as a **heavy financial burden**. Among the female-led families, several participants said that they routinely disconnect Internet service at times when other household needs take priority (like Christmas).
- While a great majority of these low-income families said it was very easy or easy to *find* product safety information on the Internet, **less than half of them find the information very easy or easy to understand**.

This modest study also revealed that parents and family resource practitioners alike prefer to see product safety and family health information disseminated in a variety of ways, including not only on the Internet but also in brochures developed by government departments (like Health Canada) and through guest speakers (for instance, public health nurses).

A full report and highlights from it can be downloaded from the FRP Canada home page at www.frp.ca. □

Enriching Family Literacies in FRPs

For many years, family resource programs across Canada have been supporting families to provide stimulating learning environments for their children. Their work includes early literacy awareness, family literacy, prevention of illiteracy and support for staying in school. The scope of these activities is not always obvious, however, since they are often folded into regular programming and not advertised as “literacy programs.”

Canada-wide survey

FRP Canada recently joined with the Fédération québécoise des organismes communautaires Famille (FQOCF) to conduct an online survey that explicitly asked organizations across the country about the ways they help families meet the challenges of today’s knowledge society. The survey’s questions related to a broad definition of “enriching family literacies,” in recognition of the fact that there are many ways to increase the pleasure with words in family life. It was not limited to activities with young children, but also looked at school-aged children and teens.

The survey’s results show that FRPs are actively promoting the enrichment of family literacies in many ways with a wide variety of populations. Moreover, they are often accomplishing this with inadequate funds and little recognition of their contribution to the field. Many survey respondents described the innovative ways that they have supported family literacy on a shoestring budget. You can read their tips in the detailed report posted on the sponsoring organizations’ websites, in French and English at www.frp.ca and in French at www.fqocf.org. □

Safe Crossing Week - November 1 - 7

Safe Kids Canada invites you to use its national rail safety education program by registering to receive free activity plans for all ages. Sign up before October 15 and you may win a \$100 community grant.



www.safekidscanada.ca/Professionals/Programs/Safe-Crossing/Safe-crossing-week.aspx

TAKE A LOOK!

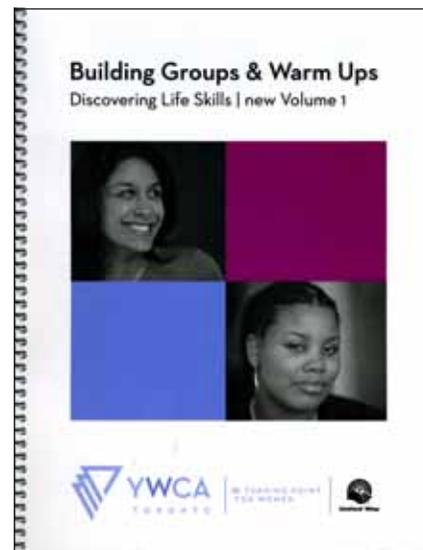
Practical Tools for Group Facilitators

The YWCA of Greater Toronto publishes a series of manuals, **Discovering Life Skills**, that will be useful to facilitators of groups that aim to help people learn and apply problem-solving skills, including in their family life. In particular, the first volume in the series helps facilitators develop the climate of safety in which participants will be able to reflect on their current attitudes and behaviour and consider making changes.

True to its title, **Building Groups & Warm Ups**, the 220-page first

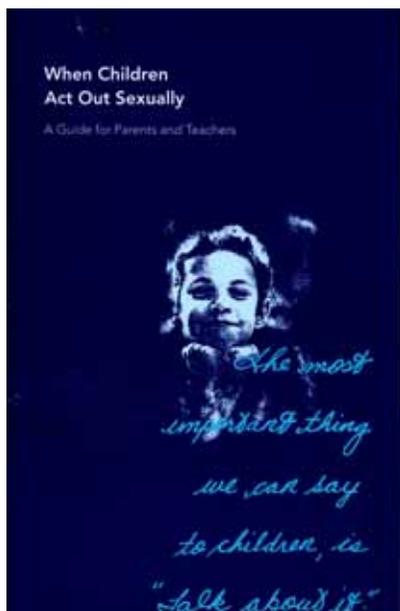
volume, includes practical suggestions and detailed instructions for setting group guidelines, building community and trust, and encouraging clear communication. In addition, there are step-by-step instructions for over 60 warm ups aimed at setting climate, encouraging inclusion, energizing a group, and providing closure. One section is devoted to quotes and stories that can spur discussion.

To order and for more information, go to www.ywcatoronto.org/publications. □



Cost: \$45, plus shipping and tax

Resources on Child Sexual Abuse



All these booklets may be ordered from the National Clearing House on Family Violence or downloaded free online from www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/publications-eng.php. Click on "Child sexual abuse."

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence distributes a series of ten short booklets produced by the Vancouver Incest and Sexual Abuse Centre, aimed at parents, teachers, children and young people. The booklet entitled, "When Children Act Out Sexually" starts by answering the question, "**What is normal sexual development?**" The authors recognize that it can be difficult for parents and teachers to know whether a child is being sexually aggressive or merely curious. They provide a helpful description of changes in behaviour that can be expected between ages 2 1/2 and 8. They then answer commonly asked questions about sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual behaviour and suggest ways that adults can help. Download from www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/nfntsx-visac-nfntsxact_e.pdf.

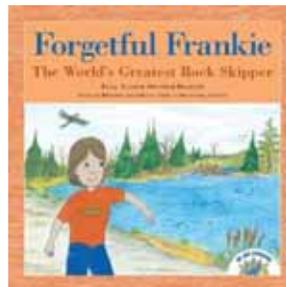
Another booklet in the series, "Sexual Abuse - What Happens When You Tell," is designed to help children who have experienced sexual abuse and their parents. It outlines why a child should tell about the abuse and who should be told. It explains how family members might react and what social workers and police do when they are told about sexual abuse. It also briefly describes the legal process when charges are laid against the offender. Download from www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/pdfs/nfntsx-visac-sexabuse_e.pdf.

Other titles in the series: "Sexual Abuse Counselling," "When Girls Have Been Sexually Abused," "When Boys Have Been Sexually Abused," "When Teenage Girls Have Been Sexually Abused," "When Teenage Boys Have Been Sexually Abused," "When Males Have Been Sexually Abused as Children," "Sibling Sexual Abuse," and "When Your Partner Was Sexually Abused as a Child." □

TAKE A LOOK!

Children's Storybooks Talk About Invisible Special Needs

Wildberry Productions is a small Ottawa company that publishes books about the lives of children who have special needs that may not be obvious at first glance. In these stories aimed at children aged 4 to 12, the main characters are affected by a variety of disorders and learning disabilities. For instance, *Forgetful Frankie* tells the story of a boy who creates a wonderful world of fun and is "the world's greatest rock skipper." Because he is affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, he also has a tendency to forget rules and their consequences. Young readers can learn about the joys and the challenges of living with FASD. Other books in the WE ARE POWERFUL™ series deal with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, Tourette Syndrome, and Anxiety and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.



Katherine and Jill Bobula have written this children's book series to help children, parents, educators, health practitioners and the public in general, develop a greater understanding of each child's condition. The books cost \$16.95 each and may be ordered from the Wildberry website. The website also provides parents and educators with a wealth of information and practical tips related to the a variety of disorders and learning disabilities. For more information, visit www.wildberryproductions.ca. □

Nature or Nurture?: A Summary of Brain Researchers' Answers

Which is most important to babies' long-term development, the genes they are born with or the experiences they have in their early years?

In the recent decades, neuroscience researchers have found that the answer to the old nature or nurture question is that both play important roles. Early experiences affect how genes are expressed and how brain connections are built.

These conclusions are often expressed in words like "epigenetics," "brain plasticity," "synaptic pruning," and "sensitive periods." For those who find these terms confusing, the Council for Early Child Development recently published a four-page brief demystifying the scientific language. It explains the mechanisms by which early brain development affects lifelong health, learning and behaviour. The Council is closing soon so download this paper **before October 31** at www.councilecd.ca/files/Brochure_Science_of_ECD_June%202010.pdf. □

Organizations Close for Lack of Funding

Over the last 15 years, Invest In Kids has developed valuable resources for parents and the professionals who support them, including *Comfort, Play & Teach: A Positive Approach to Parenting*, *The Parenting Partnership*, and the *Welcome to Parenting Boxes*. It is therefore with great regret that it has decided to close its doors, effective September 30, 2010. The organization has been struggling since the economic downturn of 2008 and can no longer carry on.



This follows on the recent announcement that the Council for Early Child Development will cease operations on October 31, 2010, also due to lack of funding.



The Council was founded in 2004 with the aim of monitoring the developments in early development science and transferring that knowledge to individuals, organizations and communities. The intention was to carry on the work of Dr. Fraser Mustard and the Hon. Margaret McCain in the Ontario Early Years Study which summarized the evidence on early child development and made policy recommendations. The Council's presentations and publications will continue to be available till the end of October at www.councilecd.ca. □

TRAINING ONLINE



Last year, Canadian Mothercraft Society offered a series of 12 presentations by leading practitioners and academics which provided an overview of infant/child mental health and development, as well as **practical strategies for working specifically with newcomer families** and the common issues that are faced by both families and settlement workers. Participants in this course registered to attend either in person or by webcast and received a certificate of participation. All of the 45-minute sessions are now archived, in both English and French. They may be viewed online, though no certificate is available. A further series of six presentations starts on September 22. To obtain a certificate of participation for this second series, register before the 2nd presentation on **October 13**. For registration and archives, go to www.mothercraft.ca.

The **Certificate in Infant Mental Health** is now available **online via distance education** from the Division of Continuing Education at York University.



Developed in coordination with Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMP) at the Hospital for Sick Children, this program is directed to workers in the field of infant development, prevention and/or early intervention with infants with special needs, and with infants living in high-risk environments. The Certificate program includes theoretical concepts, current research, experiential exercises, video vignettes, peer consultation and role-playing. Participants will develop intervention skills to encourage positive parent-child interactions and promote optimal development in infants. The eight online courses may be taken as a complete program from September to April or separately over three years, to suit the participant's schedule.

www.coned.yorku.ca/infantmentalhealth

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 15–16, "Stress and the Family: Widening the Lens," Vancouver, BC. Living Systems. www.livingsystems.ca

October 18–19, Best Start Northern Conference, Thunder Bay, Ontario. Best Start Resource Centre. www.beststart.org/events

October 25–27, 9th International Looking After Children Conference, "Youth in Mind. Beyond Risk: the developmental needs," Montreal, Quebec. Centres Jeunesse du Québec. www.acjq.qc.ca

November 17–20, "Sharing Our Stories, Finding Our Voices," Toronto. Family Supports Institute of Ontario. www.fsio.ca

November 25–26, "Birthing the World - Best Practices in Perinatal Care," Quebec City, Quebec. Quebec Association for Public Health. www.enfanterlemonde.com

February 22–24, 2011, Best Start Annual Conference, Toronto, Ontario. Best Start Resource Centre. www.beststart.org/events

March 4–6, 2011, 4th International Meeting on Indigenous Child Health, "Securing Our Future: Advancing Circles of Caring," Vancouver, BC. Canadian Paediatric Society. www.cps.ca

April 14–15, 2011, "Expanding Horizons for the Early Years: Making Relationships Work for Infants & Toddlers," Toronto, Ontario. Infant Mental Health Promotion, Hospital for Sick Children. www.sickkids.ca/imp

April 26–29, 2011, "Early Learning and a Whole Lot More!," Montreal, Quebec. Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs. www.frp.ca

TRAINING

October 29–30, Facilitator training workshop for the program for fathers, **Father Involvement, Building Our Children's Character** (FI-BOCC). Father Involvement Initiative - Ontario Network. George Hull Centre, Toronto, Ontario. www.cfii.ca

November 10, "Growing Up in a New Land, Strategies for Service Providers Working with Young Newcomer Children." Evening Webinar, 7–9 pm for educators and child care providers of children aged six and under. Best Start Resource Centre. www.beststart.org/events/detail/growingup_webinar_2010/growingup.html

November 17–19, Facilitator Training workshop for the interactive parent-child program, **Make the Connection**. The first two days of training are for the program for parents and babies from birth to 12 months. The third day is for the program for parents and toddlers aged 12 to 24 months. Toronto, Ontario. www.firstthreeyears.org