

York Region Preschool Speech & Language Program Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program

Spring Greetings to our families and colleagues,

May is Speech and Hearing Month – a good time to reflect on the very important work that our staff, volunteers and students do and plan for the coming year.

The Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program is fully operational in all hospitals across Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pineridge and York Region. We have an excellent opportunity to meet new parents, screen their newborn's hearing and give them information about the development of their babies hearing, speech and language. A number of infants have been identified with significant hearing losses and it's rewarding to see services in place as quickly as possible for them. See Sara Koke's article for more detail.

The York Region Preschool Speech and Language Program is almost 6 years old! We're proud of the children and parent education programs we've developed. We have fantastic partnerships with many community agencies, in particular Early Intervention Services. We've worked on joint children's therapy groups and work closely with the same children who have special needs and their families. Our partnership with the Early Years Centres has been a positive one. Some newborns in hospitals miss their hearing screening, or a second screening is required, so Community Hearing Screening Clinics were established. Our Infant Hearing Screeners are given access to a quiet space in the Early Years Centre when they can complete the hearing screening. In return we offer resources and workshops to families using these beautifully equipped centres.

Our challenges providing adequate services with York Region population growth and no increases in funding continue. We've been asking the government for additional funding for the past four years. We are hopeful that the new Ministry of Children and Youth Services will hear us. Your support in talking to your MPP or writing letters to the Premier is appreciated. I ask for your flexibility and cooperation as we do our best to schedule families into the limited therapy spots we have available. Paired or group therapy are the norm for us and it is challenging to find suitable matches. We suggest that you accept the time and location you are offered by our secretaries.

We were unable to afford the 'glossy' newsletter of previous years. However, we do hope you find the contents of this one useful. Visit our web site at www.beyond-words.org for other information.

As always, please contact me with your compliments, questions or concerns at 905-472-7039.

Susan Sheffield, Director

Our Volunteers

Volunteers continue to be an important part of our program. Without them, many jobs go undone. This year we have had approx. 11 students/volunteers across the program doing clerical work, helping with the children and families, as well as, helping to collect information for Infant Hearing. We have mature volunteers who want to give all of their time and we have high school co-op students scoping out speech and language, as well as, Infant Hearing screening to see if this is a career path they might choose. In addition, we have many university students who volunteer as a requirement to gain access to the Speech & Language and Audiology master degree program.

One Volunteer's Experience

As a 3rd year university student, I had to start making decisions as to what career choice would best suit my strengths and weaknesses. After doing some research I found that a career in Speech Language Pathology would be one that I could thrive on and enjoy. As a prerequisite to the program I needed to get some experience so I decided to volunteer with the York Region Preschool Speech & Language Program (YRPSLP).

At first I looked at this volunteering as something that was required of me, but after spending a few days in the program I realized there was a lot to learn and I was eager to learn everything I could. Through my time here I have been exposed to many different types of families. As well, my awareness of the prevalence and impact of speech and language problems has increased. I have learned a great deal about the options available to families, which will help me in the future as I start a family. YRPSLP staff have been very helpful and informative, constantly helping me understand the various methods of treatment and the reasons behind doing certain activities. As well, I have been able to meet other volunteers who share my interests in becoming a Speech Language Pathologist. This has been a great opportunity to discuss school choices and applications with other people going through the same process.

My time spent volunteering with the YRPSLP has taught me many things that I will take with me to any career or personal situation that I encounter.

Caroline Bacher, Markham Stouffville Hospital, Volunteer

The Vaughan Team Update

Now that spring is finally here, the Vaughan team is experiencing exactly what spring means - CONSTRUCTION, both on the drive to work and in our very office. Even though we will be in tight space for a few weeks the team is very excited about the new space that will be coming. We are looking forward to having 3 new treatment rooms, a new reception area, a new storage area and a larger workspace. Does this mean no more “bumper chairs”? During our construction we know that our parents will support us in any way, as they have done in the past. THANK YOU!

With our new space we are also welcoming new staff. We have seen the return of Christine Randl, who was with the program previously as a Communicative Disorder Assistant in the Markham office. Now she is returning to us as a Speech Language Pathologist and will be moving from office to office to help wherever there is need. Christine, thanks for assisting at Vaughan, hopefully you can continue to support our office as needed.

Also supporting the Vaughan team is our new Clerk/Receptionist, Jeri Heydon. Jeri has been able to assist us with bookings, clerical issues and helping us to get our office in top shape. Now if we could only get over our separation issues with the files than we would be all set. Thanks, Jeri, for taking some of the weight from our shoulders. You have been a great help and a wonderful addition to our team!!

Through all this change, Vaughan has been able to develop a stronger team. We look forward to seeing everyone in the spring and look forward to what comes our way!!

THE VAUGHAN TEAM

Our Partnership with the Toronto Chinese Community Services Association

Last fall, the York Region Preschool Speech & Language Program (YRPSLP) formed a partnership with the Toronto Chinese Community Services Association (TCCSA) under the Province of Ontario’s Early Years Challenge Fund. Under this partnership, the YRPSLP has been offering a number of services at the TCCSA’s Markham site, including speech and language screenings for Chinese-speaking children up to age 5, and workshops on speech and language development and facilitation for parents, staff and volunteers in Chinese. The TCCSA is a United Way agency that provides educational, social, cultural and recreational support and resources to newcomers in the GTA and vicinity. Services include counselling, ESL classes, volunteer training, parent support programs and children’s groups.

Gigi Hsueh, Speech Language Pathologist

Group Treatment for Children Under 3

As a program committed to early intervention, a primary focus for the young children referred has always been parent training. It is important to equip our families with strategies to facilitate early language development. However, just as important is making sure these skills are put into practice on a regular basis. Although children were regularly called in for a recheck of their skills and parents were given additional activities to practice at home, we felt that a more intensive approach would be beneficial.

In response to this need, the Early Language Stimulation Group was developed and implemented. This group consists of 3-6 families with children under 3 years of age. Groups range from 4-8 sessions depending on the number of families enrolled. The focus of this group is on the implementation of strategies to encourage language development as well as some specific programming for those children who need support developing early sounds. Each session consists of a circle time, and playtime, during which the Speech-Language Pathologist and Communicative Disorders Assistant help families develop goals and practice strategies specific to their child. We have received positive feedback both from families and staff regarding the success of this new method of service delivery.

Trisha Strong, Speech Language Pathologist

Summer Therapy Options

Our spring therapy block has just started and we are already looking ahead and planning for our summer therapy block. Due to families and staff taking vacations and holidays in the summer, scheduling therapy in July and August has always been a challenge.

In an attempt to come up with service options for our families and staff, a working group composed of Brandy Laybolt, Cheryl Fedrigo, Nancy Jackson and Daniel Fiorindi met in March to discuss alternatives to our “1 time a week for 8 weeks” regular therapy block.

Possible alternatives include 4-week blocks, where the children are seen 2 times a week, for a total of 8 sessions, or Summer Camps. 4-week blocks have been offered in the past. This is the best option for families taking time off for vacation either in July or August. Children will receive 8 sessions of therapy, same structure as a “regular block” (i.e., paired children for 45-60 minutes session), every Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday for 4 weeks.

The other alternative, Summer Camps, will be structured differently. First of all, sessions will be 1 ½ hour long, 4 days a week (Monday through Thursday), over 2 weeks. Children will be seen in groups of 3 to 5. There will be a specific theme each day and a routine in every session which may include circle time, snack time, activity time, etc....

As a preschool speech and language program, we strive and hope to provide the best options for our families. Any feedback and suggestions are welcomed at any time.

Daniel Fiorindi, Clinical Coordinator

2004 - The International Year of the Child Who Stutters

This year marks the International Year of the Child Who Stutters, a combined project of the International Fluency Association, and the International Stuttering Association. All professionals who work with children who stutter, as well as self-help groups, are promoting awareness of stuttering and the options for treatment of stuttering. The York Region Preschool Speech and Language Program continues to offer treatment in the form of the 6-week Parent Fluency Program which provides parents information about stuttering and effective strategies to manage this condition. Parents are greatly supported by being in a group with other parents in the same situation. Our success rate is high and many families require no further treatment. However, for those children who continue to stutter, therapy with a clinician is also provided.

Many special events are being held to mark this International Year of the Child Who Stutters. On Saturday October 16th, hosted by the Speech Foundation of Ontario - The Stuttering Centre, there will be a full day workshop by Dr. J. Scott Yaruss, Co-director of the Stuttering Center of Western Pennsylvania, an eminent expert in the treatment of children who stutter. This workshop is entitled "Stuttering and the School-Aged Child: Issues and Options" and is open to people who stutter, families and professionals. It will be held at the Crowne Plaza Toronto Don Valley. The hotel is located at Eglinton and the DVP (on the east side of the DVP). Please call Marlene Green, 905-762-1282, extension 2674 for details.

May is Better Speech and Hearing Month – on April 19th, 2004, Rhonda Jacobson will be presenting information about communication disorders to the Richmond Hill Town Council Committee of the Whole meeting. We are asking Mayor William Bell to proclaim the month of May as Better Speech and Hearing Month in Richmond Hill. If you would like to attend, please leave a message at (905) 780-1489.

The Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD) 1994-2004

Celebrating 10 years of supporting families of children with communication disorders!



Join us for our AGM and a special celebration luncheon on Saturday, May 1st, to kick off May month activities. For ticket information, please visit our website at www.oafccd.com

ECHO (Expressive Communication Help Organization) is pleased to present a one day workshop for parents and professionals:

**"Encouraging Literacy Development
for Children with Speech/Language Disabilities"**

Presented by:

Dr. Kenn Apel, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Chair & Professor, ASHA Fellow

Department of Communicative Disorders and Sciences,
Wichita State University

When: Saturday, May 29, 2004

Where: Toronto, Ontario

Children with speech/language delays and/or disorders are at risk for issues with literacy: reading, writing and spelling. Find out more about prevention, intervention and instruction for these children at this informative workshop, presented by Dr. Kenn Apel.

Dr Apel's research and teaching interests deal with typical and non-typical language/literacy development. .

He is also co-author of "Beyond Baby Talk: From Sounds to Sentences, a Parent's Complete Guide to Language Development", the assessment software program, SPELL®, and SPELL-Links to Literacy™, a spelling instructional curriculum.

Suggested audience: Speech Language Pathologists, Communication Disorder Assistants, Educational Assistants, Literacy Teachers, Parents, Teachers, Aides, Special Education teachers

For registration details, please visit www.apraxia.ca



Parents as Partners Workshop Series

Getting Ready for Kindergarten, September 2004

These workshops are for parents of children who have been identified with special needs, including autism, speech and language problems, physical or developmental disabilities. The workshops will feature information on school and community services, and activities that will help parents prepare for an effective partnership with school staff.

These workshops are offered at no cost to families. Registration is required.

For more information or to register, please call the Early Years Centre
at (905)883-6901 or leave a message at ext. 703

Email: parentsaspartners@apraxia.ca

Online registration: www.apraxia.ca/pap/workshops/register.html

We recognize the Government of Ontario for its financial support of the ECHO "Parents as Partners" Project.

Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program

York Region has been busy! Busy making babies. From April 1, 2003 to present we have screened over 6,800 babies! We have met all of our goals:

- over 90% of the babies born in York Region have been screened
- only 6% of babies have had to return for a second screening
- and less than 1% of the babies have had to go for further audiology testing

Families have been very satisfied with the screening process; the convenience and information that they receive about their babies' hearing and early speech and language milestones.

Fifteen babies have been identified with a hearing loss this year; seven babies having significant losses that would affect their communication development. These families are resourced quickly and have chosen from the different communication development options available. Each family's decision has been based on the severity of their child's hearing loss, the child and family's needs and their own personal preferences.

Some families have opted to go to the Learning to Listen Foundation located in North York for Auditory Verbal Therapy, while others have received AV therapy closer to home under Erin Smith's (SLP) guidance. Erin will be going on maternity leave on May 7th and I know many families will be missing her. Other families have taken the opportunity to meet Delia Avarell, a Deaf ASL and Literacy Consultant. Delia comes to families with energy, passion and a strong knowledge in ASL and Deaf culture. Families have enjoyed their lessons with Delia and it is amazing how those babes are learning to sign!

The Infant Hearing Program is comprised of a fabulous team of hard working and dedicated staff. Two of our hearing screeners, Carol Costa and Premila David, are featured in a new videotape promoting hearing screening, entitled "Can Your Baby Hear?" If you are one of the thousands giving birth in York Region this year, have a look for this tape being showed in the different hospitals across Ontario.

Remember.....

If you missed the newborn hearing screening and your child is under 4 months of age, call 1-888-703-5437 to book a screen in one of our Early Years Community Screening Clinics.

If your child is between 4 months and 2 years of age and you have concerns about your child's hearing (not related to ear infections), talk to your physician and give us a call at 1-888-703-5437. Sharon Bowers, our booking/intake clerk will be happy to hear your concerns and direct you to the appropriate services.

Sara Koke, Manager/Speech Language Pathologist

Statistics

- Number of children receiving service = 1856
- Number of children on the assessment wait list = 496
- Number of children on the treatment wait list = 436
- Average wait time for an assessment = 4 months