

2SENSES Newsletter



Tri-Regional
Blind – Low Vision
Early Intervention Program

Serving York, Durham and HKPR
www.beyond-words.org

Spring/ Summer

(2 Senses is published in the spring and fall)

Did you know...

- 1 in 1000 children are born each year with visual impairment. This includes the 1 in 10,000 who are born blind.
- In 2008, this translates to 90 children living in the Tri-Region who have visual impairment which cannot be corrected by glasses alone.
- 70% of these children will have additional complex needs.

Feature Article

Children with Visual Impairments need faster access to services

Babies born blind or with low-vision aren't receiving the specialized supports they need as quickly as they could. "This was a theme repeated in our regional planning for the new Blind-Low Vision Program," says Leesa Owrarn, Manager of the Blind Low Vision Early Intervention Program. Since 85% of a child's learning occurs through vision, this could put a child at greater risk of developmental delays and communicative disorders.

In the winter of 2007, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) provided funding to create Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Programs across the Province of Ontario. Markham Stouffville Hospital was identified by MCYS as the lead agency for

York, Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge Regions (known as the Tri-Region). In preparation to launch the new Program, a regional planning day was held to identify local issues. Lack of quick access to services was one of the issues which needed attention. As of May 1st, the Program has 66 children and families registered and receiving services, but "we know there are more children across the region who have not been identified," says Owrarn. The Tri-Regional Blind-Low Vision Program is reaching out to physicians, optometrists, and ophthalmologists as part of an on-going effort to get services to babies and families without delay.

Family Focus

Parents of children with visual impairment participated in the regional planning of the Tri-Regional Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program (TRI-BLVEIP). Many shared their frustration of trying to get the help they needed for their child. Examples given included long waits for ophthalmology and lack of specialized supports once their child was finally diagnosed.

The TRI-BLVEIP is helping parents get the service they need by:

- creating one intake number 1-888-703-5437 where knowledgeable staff assist families with the referral; and
- connecting families immediately on referral to our Family Support Workers who help families navigate the system.



Relationships

What CNIB says about working with the Tri-Region

The new Tri-Regional Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program has many partners that it relies on to provide high-quality supports to children who are blind or have low-vision. In each issue of 2Senses we profile one of our partnerships.

The Tri-Regional Blind-Low Vision Program has provided CNIB with more opportunities to promote services for children with vision loss and increase referrals. Families have one-stop access to teams of social workers with complementary skills and expertise. While working through new processes and procedures has been a challenge, having

our provincial government recognize this population of children and commit sustained funding opens a door of possibilities for innovative approaches to services.

The work of an Early Childhood Vision Consultant with the Blind-Low Vision Program is never boring! What really excites me though is the unknown potential of each child and it is thrilling to take an active part in this unfolding process.

- Christopher Hodge, Regional Supervisor Client Services, CNIB



NON-SENSE

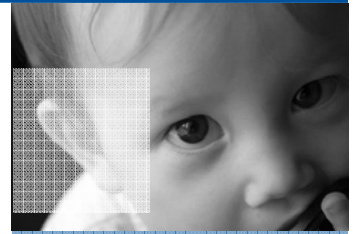
The Blind can't see a thing. This is nonsense. Total blindness is actually rare. Most blind children have a small amount of useful vision. They may be able to see light and dark or they may be able to see movement.



Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program

Serving York, Durham and HKPR
www.beyond-words.org

2SENSES Newsletter



Spring / Summer 2008

(2 Senses is published in the spring and fall)

Did you know...

- 3 in 1000 children will be born with permanent hearing loss. Another 3/1000 will be identified with hearing loss as children.
- Early detection of hearing issues is necessary to ensure optimal speech/ language development.
- In 2007/08, the Tri-IHP screened over 14,000 babies. 47 children were identified with hearing loss and referred for services.

Family Focus

"Everyone has been super," says Mrs. Rogers, parent of an 8-month girl who has been identified with a unilateral hearing loss. "The staff are very professional and take my feelings into account." Emily has a team of professionals from the Infant Hearing Program, Early Intervention Services, and E.C. Drury School's Home Visiting Services. "The coordination is outstanding," says Rogers. There is however some areas for improvement. "It is so important to consider how the information is given when a hearing loss is identified", she reminds us. "Such crucial information should not be rushed. There should be written information and a copy of the audiogram given to parents so they can read this after the appointment. In some cases, a follow-up meeting with their audiologist may be necessary so parents can really understand the impact of hearing on the development of speech and language." This is good advice and a reminder to all busy professionals," says Leesa Owrn, Program Manager.

Feature Article

Infant Hearing Audiology Clinic opens in York Region

The Ministry of Children and Youth has supported the development of an audiology clinic in York Region for children as part of the Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program. "Their support is great news," say Leesa Owrn, Manager of the Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program (IHP). "Families living in York will no longer have to travel to Toronto to obtain IHP audiology services for their children."

Louise Tanaka and April Malandrino are the clinical audiologists providing surveillance screening, hearing, assessments, hearing aid prescription and verification for children in the Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program. Both have been providing services under IHP for many years and are trained in the proto-

cols of the program. These audiologists are now establishing links to Ear, Nose and Throat doctors and dispensers of hearing aids who are experienced working with children.

Audiology services are offered through the Infant Hearing Program in Durham Region by Sharon Woodcox at Grandview Children's Centre and in Haliburton, Kawartha, and Pine Ridge Regions through Judy Keith at Chemong Audiology in Bridge North near Peterborough. "We will continue to refer children from time to time to Toronto IHP audiology services as demand or need necessitates but the vast majority of children will be seen by the IHP audiologist in their local region," says Owrn.

Relationships

Five Counties Children's Centre

The Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program has several partners in its work identifying and providing services to children with permanent hearing loss. In each issue of 2Senses we profile one of our partnerships.

Five Counties Children's Centre is pleased to be a partner in the Tri-Regional Infant Hearing and Blind-Low Vision programs. As a Children's Treatment Centre serving the counties of Peterborough, Northumberland, Haliburton and the City of Kawartha Lakes, providing family support worker expertise

through our family services department and Auditory Verbal Therapy through our speech language pathology services is a natural extension of our existing services and supports to families. Children who continue to require speech language therapy services are transitioned smoothly in the preschool speech language services offered through the Centre.

- Alex Cranfield, Manager FCC

NON-SENSE

You can't test for hearing loss in babies. This is nonsense. New technology allows the audiologist to identify hearing loss and establish the degree of loss across various frequencies separately for each ear. For families who choose amplification for their child, the audiologist can use the results from the audiogram to fit a hearing aid by six months of age.

