

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH COMMUNICATION DISORDERS O.A.F.C.C.D. NEWSLETTER

MAY 1999

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President's Update

There has been a lot of progress so far this year in terms of more speech and language services for children. Specifically, the provincial government has announced \$2.2 million for preschool speech and language service enhancements and a number of school boards have increased the number of Speech and Language Pathologist positions.

The enhancement dollars for preschool services are part of the twenty million dollars originally announced in 1996. However, the 32 preschool systems are now up and running and these new dollars will be able to be quickly deployed in meeting children's needs and reducing waiting lists. (See attached update list of contact Preschool contact numbers.)

There is more good news as most of the community preschool systems have now organized simplified access procedures and are gearing up for extensive public awareness campaigns. In addition, any parent can call with concerns and, if necessary, be referred for an assessment without also getting a Doctor's referral. However, OAFCCD continues to recommend that families contact their family doctor with their concerns as the speech and language problem could be related to other health problems.

OAFCCD reps sitting on School Board Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) have reported that a number of school boards have plans to hire additional Speech - Language Pathologists or hire SLP's for the first time. However, the situation is less positive in Ottawa-Carleton where parents have been fighting very hard to retain the current levels of services. We are also becoming aware of the pressure that will be created as more children receive preschool services and get ready to start school. We are already hearing from parents frustrated with the gaps in service for senior kindergarten children.

I would like to thank all of the members that took the

time to write to Dave Johnson. OAFCCD has been invited to participate in the review of Policy/Program Memorandum 81 and the Inter-Ministerial Guidelines for Speech and Language Services, but unfortunately no dates have been set for meetings.

We encourage members to write again to Minister, Dave Johnson if their services are not improving. In addition, we also encourage all members to raise the issues during the upcoming election campaign (See Election Action article on Page 2)

I would like to encourage any parents who are within driving distance of Toronto to consider attending the Annual General Meeting. In addition to the opportunity to meet other members and share concerns, an excellent workshop is being provided by Lindsay Moir. Lindsay is a retired Education Officer with the Ministry of Education and Training, and he is very knowledgeable of recent changes in Education legislation and policy.

**Ontario Association For Families of Children
with Communication Disorders**

Annual General Meeting

Saturday May 29, 1999

1 - 4pm

Toronto Catholic District School Board

80 Sheppard Street East

(Yonge and Sheppard)

North York, Toronto

Featuring : Education Workshop for Parents
by Lindsay Moir, Combnadh Consulting
(Combnadh (com-NEW) is Gaelic for Assistance)

***“Preparing Effective Needs Statements
and Individual Education Plans “***

**RSVP: Sharen Heath, (519)842-9506 by Friday
May 21, 1999**

ELECTION ACTION

There are many signs that a provincial election is just a few weeks away. This election provides an opportunity for parents to increase awareness about our children's needs and get these issues on the political agenda of all the parties.

OAFCCD members are encouraged to talk to candidates that knock on the door and to attend all candidate meetings in their community. Please use the attached list of key issues as a guide for asking questions. Focus on the issue that most concerns you and about which you can share a personal experience.

OAFCCD KEY ISSUE

◆ **Inadequacy of publicly funded speech and language services for children.**

Specific concerns:

- **Preschool Speech and Language Initiative** is increasing public awareness and parent referrals for service but funding is inadequate and many families still face long waiting lists.
- Early identification of speech and language problems is highlighting the **other needs of the child and family**. Families then face long waits to get additional services.
- Families getting preschool speech and language service are concerned about the **transition to school** and lack of services in many school boards.
- **Inconsistency of school board speech and language services** across the province, especially with regard to utilization of **Speech-Language Pathologists**.
- **New education funding model** is having mixed effects, with some school boards able to increase services and others having to decrease services.
- **Intensive Support Amount (ISA)** funding claim process is increasing need for labeling and documentation regarding students' needs.
- **Lack of systematic identification** of children with communication disorders in the school system, especially at key developmental stages.
- Service gaps created by **Policy/Program Memorandum 81** and the division of

responsibilities for speech and language services between three Ministries.

- Service disruptions created through the **Request for Proposal (RFP) process of Community Care Access Centres** who provide speech and language services through the School Health Support Program.
- Inadequacy of services for children requiring **augmentative communication**.
- Inadequacy of **professional development** and in-services for classroom teachers who are required to adapt and modify curriculum for students with communication disorders.

SEAC REPS

SEAC reps can make a difference at the school board level. Having a representative of OAFCCD at the monthly Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) meetings helps to remind the school board administration and Trustees that our children have needs that must be met, and that Speech-Language Pathologists are an important member of school services.

OAFCCD still needs SEAC reps on many school boards. If you are interested, please call Alison Morse at (519)688-0369 for more information.

Nancy Myers is the SEAC rep in Ottawa-Carleton DSB and she has been fighting valiantly to maintain existing speech and language service levels. She would like to hear from other SEAC reps about the level of services in their school boards. Call Nancy at (613)523-7701 or myerscal@sympatico.ca

Jane Bromley, SLP

It is with deep regret that we share the news of Jane Bromley's untimely death in February this year. Jane was a member of OAFCCD and had been a SEAC rep for OAFCCD on the Avon-Maitland District School Board. Jane leaves behind, her husband Steve, and sons Matthew and Orrey.

The Huron-Perth OAFCCD Chapter and all the families that she assisted will miss her.

SLOW DANCE

Have you ever watched kids
on a merry-go-round
Or listened to the rain
slapping on the ground?

Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight
Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?

You better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

Do you run through each day on the fly
When you ask "How are you?"
do you hear the reply?

When the day is done,
do you lie in your bed
With the next hundred chores
running through your head?

You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

Ever told your child,
We'll do it tomorrow
And in your haste, not see his sorrow?

Ever lost touch,
Let a good friendship die
'Cause you never had time
to call and say "Hi"?

You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

When you run so fast to get somewhere
You miss half the fun of getting there.
When you worry and hurry through your day,
It is like an unopened gift....
Thrown away...

Life is not a race.
Do take it slower
Hear the music
Before the song is over.

Inspirational Poems and Stories about Children and Families

A fundraiser project of the Lanark, Leeds
And Grenville OAFCCD Chapter

This is a book containing a collection of over 50 poems and stories. Some are about Special Needs Children and some are about all children. A few of the titles include:

- Commitments for Parents
- Maybe you know my Daughter
- It Matters to this One

The book has a clear protective front cover and a protective blue linen back cover. It is all bound together with a spiral coil. The price is \$10.00 Canadian plus \$3.00 postage for shipping for a total of \$13.00 per copy.

All proceeds will go to our local chapter to help offset the costs of mailings, workshops, meetings etc. of our support group for parents. For more information on our chapter please visit <http://www.cyberus.ca/oafccd/lanark>

The book makes a wonderful gift for those numerous people that work with and care for our children. If you would like to order a copy of this beautiful inspirational book please write your name and address on a piece of paper and the number of Poem books you would like, and send with a cheque (Canadian residents only) or International Money Order in Canadian Funds payable to **Lanark, Leeds & Grenville OAFCCD** to the address below.

Lanark, Leeds & Grenville OAFCCD
c/o Susan Richards
R.R. # 5,
342 Code Drive,
Smiths Falls, Ontario,
K7A 4S6

Chapter Leaders Note: Susan is willing to arrange for other Chapters to use these books as a fund raiser. For details, please contact Susan Richards at (613)283-3709 or (613)284-1977 (days). Limited copies will also be available at AGM.

MAY IS SPEECH AND HEARING MONTH

DID YOU KNOW THAT.....

- Speech and language skills are the most critical human functions allowing full participation in society because:
 - Language provides the main method of establishing and maintaining social relationships.
 - Language constitutes a principal means of organizing behaviour and is central to the normal acquisition of many cognitive and academic skills, particularly literacy.
 - Communicative competency is strongly linked to social acceptability and popularity in preschool and school age children.
 - Speech and language disorders are strongly related to failure in reading and writing and good literacy skills are essential in our society.
- Studies have found that “liked” children are the most conversationally skilled and “disliked” children are the least conversationally skilled.
- Other conscious or unconscious biases against children with communication impairments include:
 - children with communication impairments are likely to be ignored by other children.
 - adults consistently and incorrectly rate children with communication disorders as less intelligent than other children.
 - individuals with communication disorders are considered to be intellectually slow and handicapped by most members of society.
- Children with communication disorders are at risk for poor development and maintenance of friendships and equitable educational treatment.

BUT, THE GOOD NEWS IS.....

- Speech and language services administered by Speech - Language Pathologists provide crucial services which advance the mission of education, to prepare children for life.
- There is clear evidence that language intervention is effective and that the earlier treatment is begun, the better the outcome.
- An Speech - Language Pathologist can help children to improve their articulation and fluency which in turn increases the probability that the teacher will understand the child and know what she has learned.
- For school children with weak language skills, language services which are integrated into the education setting by school Speech-Language Pathologists have resulted in important educational outcomes.
 - Significant gains in reading skills for elementary school children.
 - Meaningful improvements in adaptive behaviour in the classroom and at home.
 - Substantial reductions in the drop-out rate for students in secondary school.