



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

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Provincial Update

OAFCCD has survived a difficult year. In the early part of the year the prospects for survival of the organization looked uncertain, as the Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant was ending and there was insufficient funding or reserves to keep the organization till the end of the year.

It was clear that OAFCCD must either change and prioritize which activities can be provided or find additional sources of funding. The Board responded to the situation in several ways. Firstly, a consultant was recruited to help with Strategic Planning and setting the future direction.. Secondly, the organization significantly increased the number of grant proposals for projects to help families.

Both strategies have been helpful. The consultant has helped the Board to identify strengths and concerns, and will continue to help with a strategic planning session for members at the Annual Conference. OAFCCD has also been fairly successful with grant application and is pleased to announce the following:

Early Years Challenge Fund Grant for a three year project in Oxford County to help families, of young children with special needs, become knowledgeable about special education and effective partners with school staff.

Hospital for Sick Children Foundation grant for the OAFCCD Annual Conference which will be held in Toronto on October 25th. (See story on page 4 and enclosed flyer for details of the Conference.)

United Way of Oxford grant to increase public awareness of communication disorders and where to get help.

Unfortunately, these grants will not help with the day to day activities of OAFCCD, including the Newsletter, Parent Fact Sheets, parent support or volunteer training and support. Responses from member surveys have indicated that all of these services are important to families and we would like to continue offering them.

In order to maintain services that are important to you, we will continue to seek out grants and sources of operating funds, but we also need your help. Annual membership fees have been paid by less than 20% of individuals on our mailing list. Your \$20 membership fee could make a tremendous difference. If everyone paid, we would generate over \$12,000 and maintain services for another year. (Note that our annual budget is approximately \$22,000 and the organization only has one part time employee).

To help keep OAFCCD operating, please pay your membership fees and consider making a donation. OAFCCD is a registered Charity and tax receipts will be issued for donations. As it is likely that the Membership Fees will be increased next year, a special deal is offered for those who want to save money, and help the organization, by paying for next year in advance. (Check the membership renewal form for more information.)

You can also help OAFCCD by becoming a volunteer. Volunteers are needed to help organize parent workshops, provide parent support and represent the organization at school board Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC). If you think you have some time and energy to help OAFCCD, please call Alison Morse at (519)842-9506. For more information on the work of a SEAC rep, see the article on page 4.

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WORDS AND FEELINGS

Children with speech and language disorders often have difficulty expressing their emotions. Children that don't have the language skills or vocabulary to express feeling sometimes become frustrated, and this can lead to behaviour problems. When children are sad, angry or tired, they may need help in identifying and dealing with their feelings.

Provide child with the words

When children are learning to talk we constantly label items, actions and feelings. However, when a child has difficulty talking we may concentrate on functional language and forget about their emotions and feelings. It is important to continue labelling feelings and to let them know you understand. For example:

“You feel sad because Sarah went home.”

“You feel mad at me because I won't let you have more candy.”

“You feel frustrated because the homework is hard.”

These sentences may be too long or complex for the child to say, but by putting their feelings into words it will help them to feel understood. It will also provide the child with the language of emotions.

Provide child with strategies to deal with feelings

Ideally, we want children to use words, not actions like hitting or kicking, to deal with their frustration or anger. For children with speech or language disorders this may not be easy. It is important that your child has some words or gestures to control a situation. Control words like, “Stop”, “Wait” or “No” can be used by the child to express their concerns and get others to listen.

It is also important to help the child problem solve and find solutions. The parent or adult may have to ask a number of questions to get information about the problem and help the child find a solution. For example:

Child: “I hate Mike. He's mean.”

Parent: “You feel mad at Mike, because he has done something..”

Child: “Mike took my car and I want it.”

Parent: “You feel mad at Mike because he took your car and you want it back.”

Child: “Yes”

Parent: “What can you do to get the car back?”

Child: “Go get it.”

Parent: “Yes, you could go and take it from Mike, but that might make Mike feel angry. What else could you do?”

Child: “Give him truck.”

Parent: “Yes, you could offer to trade the truck for the car.”

Other solutions that you could offer the child, include waiting until later to ask for the car, starting a different game with Mike, or asking a parent or another person to talk to Mike. Remember to praise the child when they use their words to solve a problem or find a better way to express their feelings.

Let child know what behaviour is not allowed

It is important that a child knows what they can't do to express feelings. Be clear about your expectations and identify unacceptable behaviour.

“I know you are angry at your friend but hitting is not allowed.”

“When you are mad at me, you can't scream at me.”

It is very important to use “I -messages” and keep the message focussed on the unacceptable behaviour.

“I can't understand you when you scream.”

Comfortable environment

Some parents have reported that their children are slow to notice when they are too hot, or when they are tired. These children may not pick up on environmental clues, like an open window which is making the room chilly. Others become unhappy without realizing it is because they are hungry or thirsty.

For example, a child may not realize they are too hot because the sun is shining through the window and warming the room. If they are working hard on a math problem and having difficulty, they may not have realized they need to remove their sweater. Parents may need to describe the problem and encourage the child to change the environment.

Parent “I see you are having difficulty with the math problem, perhaps it is getting too warm in here and you are feeling hot.”

Parent: “I see that you are getting frustrated with that project, perhaps you are tired and should take a break.”

Non-Verbal Language

Some children with language impairment are also unable to recognize non-verbal cues, which creates difficulties in judging the feelings of others. Feelings are expressed in facial expression, body language, and tone of voice. You may need to teach your child to look for these emotional clues.

TV can be a great teaching tool and family situation comedies can provide lots of opportunities for looking at non-verbal cues. It can be a casual discussion as you are watching a favourite show, or you can use a taped show, with the sound off, to illustrate different feelings and emotions. Ask the child to guess how the character is feeling, and tell you what clues he is using.

You can help the child to notice and describe facial expressions, posture, and gestures and what they mean. Picture books, such as the Mr. Men series (Mr. Silly, Mr. Grumpy, etc), can also be used to identify feelings and expressions. More subtle clues, such as interpersonal space, speech patterns and attitudes, are harder to notice, but you can point them out and discuss what they mean.

Teenagers can be very emotional!!

The range of emotions will become more complex as the child grows up. Young children may occasionally feel embarrassed when they are caught doing something wrong, but teens, who have a greater need to fit in, may constantly be embarrassed by their own actions, or yours. A teen who has a crush, or falls in love, will be experiencing new emotions and will often be unsure how to express their feelings.

Communicating with teens can be difficult but parents should continue to use many of the same strategies. Provide words to label the emotions and describe the feelings. Help the teen to identify problems and possible solutions. Be clear about your behaviour expectations and the consequences.

Remember we can't always make our children feel better, but we can give them the language to describe their feelings and the ability to problem solve.

Provincial Election Campaign

When evaluating the merits of different candidates and parties during the current election campaign, consider the OAFCCD goals and objectives:

OAFCCD Goal:

Adequate publicly funded speech and language services for children in Ontario

Specific Objectives:

- Mandate school boards to provide speech and language services
- Implement province wide standards for speech and language programs in schools
- Designate Special Education funding for speech and language services
- Increase annual funding for Preschool Speech and Language Initiative
- Maintain publicly funded hearing testing and assessments.
- Increase number of Speech-Language Pathologists graduating from University

If you have the opportunity to talk with any of the candidates, please share with them your concerns about speech and language services. You can also provide them with copies of OAFCCD Position Papers which are available on the website: www.oafccd.com or by calling (519)842-9506.

Preschool Speech and Language Services

The Preschool Speech and Language Initiative was first announced in 1996 and the program has never been provided with annual increases. This program has significantly increased the number of children who are identified with speech and language disorders.

Most of the Preschool programs are at capacity with waiting lists growing longer. Without more funds many of the programs will be forced to reduce services. OAFCCD will continue to advocate for more funding for this program and you can help by contacting your local MPP candidates and sharing your concerns.

SEAC Reps Needed For January 2004

Every school board in Ontario has a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) which meets monthly. The committee consists of volunteers representing different provincial associations. The SEAC reviews the annual Special Education Plan and provides the Trustees with advice on special education programs and services.

“Since I became a SEAC rep I have learned a lot about school services and I have had the opportunity to make a difference. SEAC reps are respected by the staff and Trustees and speech and language services have been maintained because of OAFCCD efforts.” Wendie Dupuis, Thames Valley DSB SEAC rep.

OAFCCD currently has parent representatives on 15 boards and we would like to recruit more volunteers. SEAC reps must be Canadian Citizens, who are over 18 and who support the local school board through their taxes.

OAFCCD supports SEAC reps with a monthly update from the Provincial Co-ordinator and an annual meeting of SEAC reps from across the province. The SEAC rep is your voice on the school board. If you are interested in becoming a SEAC rep and would like to find out more, please call Alison Morse at (519)842-9506.

OAFCCD Workshops

September 23rd, Georgetown - Halton Region OAFCCD Chapter Meeting at the Masonic Temple, Georgetown at 7pm. **Contact: Heather Harry at (905)873-1732.**

October 18th, Smiths Falls - Lanark, Leeds & Grenville Chapter are sponsoring *“Raising a Child with Disabilities Parent Information Fair and Workshop”* featuring keynote speaker Dr. Mark Nagler. Workshop presenters include Lindsay Moir, a Music Therapist, a Special Olympics representative, and a SLP. **Contact: Susan Richards at (613) 284-1977 or Connie Beckett at (613) 284-1227**

Date TBA, Kitchener - *“Helping Children with Language Disorders Learn to Read and Write”* presentation by Susan Lawton, Speech-Language Pathologist with Waterloo School Board. **Contact: Alison Morse at (519)842-9506.**

OAFCCD Annual Conference

October 25th, 2003

Toronto Catholic DSB Education Centre

This year OAFCCD has been fortunate to receive support from the Hospital for Sick Children Foundation for the annual conference.

The event will feature Carla Johnson, Associate Professor in Speech-Language Pathology, at the University of Toronto as the Keynote Speaker. Carla has been involved in long term studies which have tracked the progress of children with communication disorders from Kindergarten to graduation. OAFCCD has cited her research in several position papers.

The morning will also include a special presentation by Kathy Schaffer, Education Officer with the Special Education Project at the Ministry of Education. Kathy is a former teacher and principal with the Thames Valley DSB and she has been closely involved in the development of the standards for Individual Education Plans (IEP). Her presentation will include information on the role of parents in the development of IEPs.

Workshops in the afternoon include a presentation by teacher Ginny Marx and Karen Rolston (SLP) of the Toronto Catholic DSB Kindergarten Language Program on how parents can help children to build the language skills for reading; and a session on growing up, and what social and emotional changes parent should expect, by Dr. Maria Kokai-Czapar, a Psychologist, who works with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program at the Toronto Catholic DSB.

To Register for the conference, complete the enclosed registration form and mail with fee to OAFCCD.

OAFCCD Website at

www.oafccd.com

The *Communicating for Fun* weekly Parent and Child Activity Calenders have been added to the Website. Print a calender and try some of the activities that promote better speech, language and hearing. There are also lots of resources on school services, and information to help parents prepare for IEPs and IPRCs. Please check out the Website!