Children are learning

Children are healthy

Families are strong and stable

Children are positively connected

Working together towards the Halton 7
Introduction

It has been two years since Our Kids Network (OKN) decided to move from a service integration focus to a collective impact focus. Over the past year, we have had many discussions about the “fit” of Collective Impact and how to insure that this shift would strengthen the work of OKN. We have discussed roles, focus and language and are intentionally aligning “how” we work to maximize impact.

Over the past year, we have used a collective impact lens to create a Development Plan that focuses on building capacity to achieve our vision, mission and focus on the Halton 7. The plan was developed under the leadership of the Senior Executive Group (SEG) who provides oversight and direction to the Our Kids Network and oversees the provision of backbone support, and with the support of the Collective Impact Planning Committee (CIPC) who oversees the implementation of the vision mission and directions of OKN. The plan focuses on building on the work that OKN has been doing and strengthening the focus on Collective Impact.

Four key areas of focus have been identified:

**ENGAGEMENT**
Bringing people with common concerns or stake (youth, families, neighbourhoods, members) progressively into awareness, education and action through a variety of modalities ranging from face-to-face to online/virtual.

**KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION**
The acquisition and application of knowledge and skills on identified priority areas, at all levels within member organizations; learning supports may be face-to-face and online. In addition to member organizations, knowledge mobilization may be for parents and communities as well.

**SYSTEM NAVIGATION**
Understood variously as service coordination, service integration, pathways to care, improving access and reducing barriers, seamless service – but in all cases as the need to make the services within the system accessible to families who need the right service at the right time.

**RESEARCH**
To gather, roll-up, analyze and report on demographics and trends for children, youth and families across the Region of Halton.

A comprehensive work plan has been developed to guide the work over the next 3 years.

Two distinct roles for OKN were identified during the course of developing the plan. OKN as a network working towards the common vision that all children thrive and the Halton 7, which are the work of all our planning, alignment and action tables. And OKN as backbone support to ensure that the collective efforts of the network are meaningfully and adequately supported, which is the work of the Senior Executive Group, The Collective Impact Planning Committee, backbone committees, and staff.

This work includes:

- bringing people and organizations together to work on our common agenda and common issues
- guiding the vision and strategy of OKN
- supporting, aligning and coordinating activities
- leading data collection and shared measurement so that we know and understand the impact of our work
- providing information, training and forums on data and research so service providers can use data and research to inform and shape their planning and activities
- ensuring continuous and effective communication
- focusing on engagement and relationships, relationships, relationships. We know that we are stronger and better able to support children, youth and families if we work together, so we focus on building relationships between individuals and also between organizations and agencies.

It has been a “messy” year with lots of great discussion and work, but it has been a year with many successes that has strengthened OKN and the collective work that we do.
Working together towards the Halton 7

All Children Thrive
Collective Action for Children, Youth and Families

The Halton 7

Backbone Support
Communications Advisory
Knowledge Mobilization
Research & Evaluation

Planning Committees
Children’s Mental Health & Developmental Services
Community PARTNERS Infant to Six Years
Early Years
School Years
HUBS

Secretariat (HCAS)

Senior Executive Group

Collective Impact Planning Committee

Alignment & Coordination
Asset Building Strategy Table
Parenting
Service Coordination

Children are healthy
Children are positively connected
Children are safe
Children are learning
Schools are connected to the community
Families are strong and stable
Neighbourhoods are where we live, work & play
Using a process (Research Based Accountability) that begins with the end in mind and works backwards, step by step towards the means, Our Kids Network has identified seven conditions of well-being needed for children, families, and the community as a whole to thrive. These conditions are known as the “Halton 7”.

We believe, the entire community, including government and business, shares responsibility for achieving the conditions of well-being for children and families.

In their planning and activities, OKN committees focus on one or more of the Halton 7 as indicated in the following reports.

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### Research & Evaluation Committee

**Chair:** Dr. Shelley Lothian, Senior Research Advisor, Children’s Services, Regional Municipality of Halton

Responsible for research, evaluation, and knowledge transfer. Members are research-focused individuals from Protocol Partners and other community partners. Reports to CIPC.

#### Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS)

The KPS is a population-based online survey for parents of 5-year old children attending kindergarten within the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board. The survey is completed every 3 years since 2003. The KPS covers a broad range of topics including child health, nutrition, physical activity, child care, early learning opportunities and neighbourhood cohesion.

**Desired outcome**

Quality local data for research and planning use in Halton.

**Results**

The KPS participation rate for the 2015 survey was 37%. This is an excellent response rate given the online methodology used. In total 2,257 Halton parents completed the survey.

**Lessons learned**

Having a good response rate is paramount to having good data for the community to use. In the 2015 cycle, a number of key actions were taken to improve response rates from 2012. An incentive gift (children’s book) was provided thanks to Halton Region Children’s Services. Both of the participating school boards provided access to parents and sent emails with a link to the survey. These actions resulted in a 24% increase in the response rate from 2012.

### Early Development Instrument (EDI)

The EDI is a teacher-completed developmental assessment of 5-year-old children implemented by all publicly funded schools every 3 years, since 2003. In 2015, about 6,100 EDI assessments were completed by Halton Kindergarten teachers. Final numbers are not available at this time, but expectations are that at least 95% of the EDI were completed leaving Halton with full population coverage for the EDI results.

**Desired outcome**

Quality local data for research and planning use in Halton.

**Results**

In total, 444 teachers were trained to complete the electronic EDI assessments on their students. All eligible teachers participated and all eligible schools participated.

**Lessons learned**

All school boards provided excellent preparation, organization and an effective training program, resulting in the training of 450 teachers and over 6000 complete assessments.
BACKBONE SUPPORT for Our Kids Network

Ensures that the collective efforts of the network are meaningfully and adequately supported.

Knowledge Mobilization
Chair: vacant
Promotes and coordinates the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills on identified priority areas, at all levels within member organizations; learning supports may be face-to-face and online; in addition to member organizations, knowledge mobilization may be for parents and communities as well. Reports to CIPC with chair or designate participating on CIPC.

OKN Learning Centre
An online resource for professionals that consolidates OKN learning tools, training and events and creates a collaborative learning environment.

Desired outcomes
Improved access to learning tools and training and increased support for putting research and other information into practice (Knowledge Mobilization).
Enhanced opportunities for learning and support for OKN committees and community stakeholders to achieve the Halton 7.

Results
A Learning Centre test section is on the OKN website for focus group testing.
The section consolidates all OKN resources and products from across the website to enable quick and easy access. Resources have been organized in four modules (Engagement, Asset-Building, Research and System Navigation). The first phase of the Learning Centre is set to launch in early 2016.

Communications Advisory Group (CAG)
Chair: Beth Williams, Communications and Marketing Manager, Our Kids Network
Provides consultation, advice, and resources to inform, enhance, and support OKN communications planning and activities. Provides recommendations and information on OKN communications from the partner/agency/audience perspective. Reports to CIPC.

Continuous Communication
A clear understanding of Our Kids Network values, frameworks and culture is needed to sustain strong partnerships and create new ones and to ensure that committees and working groups feel aligned and supported in their initiatives.

Desired outcome
Awareness and knowledge of vision, mission, Halton 7, achievements, frameworks, challenges, data and products is demonstrated among target audiences from 2014 to 2015.

Results
More messaging tools available to promote clear and consistent messaging about OKN and Collective Impact. Updated and expanded OKN orientation package in Learning Centre. Several media stories. OKN Annual Meeting and Annual Report. Increased website page views. Increased social media followers.

Lessons learned
Protocol Partners’ and participating agencies’ engagement, contributions and feedback are key in developing effective messaging and other communications.

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Asset-Building Strategy Table

Co-chairs: Mary Tabak, OKN Developmental Assets Project Manager; Cindy Morin, Manager of Regional Children’s Services

Develops, implements, and evaluates the Halton Strategy for Developmental Assets through networking, partnerships, and use of research. Reports to CIPC.

Youth Collective Impact

Improve mental well-being and decrease at-risk behaviour in Grade 7 to 10 students by increasing assets through meaningful adult relationships and connections in their vulnerable neighbourhood over the next 5 years.

Desired outcomes

Increase key stakeholder collaboration and increased youth engagement.

Results

A neighbourhood was identified by using local data and testimonials. Youth and key stakeholders are engaged.

Stage 2 funding is approved.

Lessons learned

Youth voice and meaningful engagement is key. Professionals working together with a common vision helps to speed progress. Sharing data works.
Halton Parent Advisory Committee (HPAC)

Co-chairs: Nikki Taylor, Parent Education Manager, Oakville Parent-Child Centre; Lynne Hanna, Manager, School years Health, Regional Municipality of Halton

Promotes positive parenting in Halton through coordination, planning, advising, and advocacy. Reports to CIPC.

Reviewing Committee Purpose and Setting Priorities

With the implementation of Halton iparent, and as a result of becoming a working group of OKN, HPAC was ready to set new directions and priorities. Over the year, we worked together to examine the purpose of the group, review past successes and set our sights to the future.

After significant discussion and consideration, HPAC identified the following priorities: Parent Engagement; Halton Information Hub (as part of Halton iparent); Development of an asset building curriculum for parents.

Desired outcomes

HPAC will make contributions to each of these priorities in collaboration with other OKN committees.

Results

The Halton iparent Steering Committee has requested that HPAC review content and develop criteria for the Information Hub, which will be embedded in the Halton iparent website. As well, work has begun on the asset-building curriculum for parents.

Lessons learned

As a result of the transition to OKN Alignment Committee, HPAC priorities align with OKN strategic directions creating a broader perspective for the committee Terms of Reference. Updating the HPAC Terms of Reference and aligning priorities has led to a renewed purpose as a committee and revitalized commitment to the parenting work committee members do in the community.

Service Coordination

Co-chairs: Sue Brooks, Service Coordination Manager; Susan Probert, Coordinator of Connections Halton and Service Resolution, Regional Municipality of Halton

Promotes Service Coordination in Halton through awareness and training. Reports to CIPC.

Coordinated Service Planning Proposal for the Ontario Special Needs Strategy

Over the last 10 months the Halton Service Coordination Steering Committee has put their work plan on hold as the community worked through the Coordinated Service Planning proposal for the Ontario Special Needs Strategy. This strategy specifically outlines the need for a single coordinated service plan for every family with a child or youth with special needs. This proposal was supported and approved by Ministry of Education, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Community and Social Services and Ministry of Health.

Desired outcomes

As part of this proposal, Halton identified the need to “build capacity” within the Halton Service Coordination Model to ensure that it could support families with multiple and/or complex special needs and develop a single service plan. The model also needs to ensure that all professionals assigned to be a “Service Coordinator” will follow the new guidelines, documentation and reporting mechanisms that will be created when the implementation phase of the strategy begins.

Results

Halton Service Coordination training continues to be offered over 2 half-day training sessions, Introduction to Halton Service Coordination and Facilitating Service Coordination. Currently offering four trainings of each session per year. Plan to enhance trainings and recruit new trainers to prepare for the new implementation phase.
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### Early Years Committee (EY)
**Co-chairs:** Rebecca Barrows-Vrankulj, Executive Director, Milton Community Resource Centre; Mary Beth Jonz, Director of Children’s Services, Regional Municipality of Halton

Provides strategic direction and planning related to children prenatal to 6-years-old. Reports to CIPC.

#### Working groups and initiatives

#### Early Years Developmental Relationships Video Project
**Chair:** Robin Garell, Executive Director, Oakville Parent Child Centre

A working group of the Early Years Committee identified a gap in developmental relationships information for parents with young children. An environmental scan of resources and literature revealed that there are few ways for families to access and learn about building relationships in the first six years of a child’s life.

The working group produced and launched a video titled Family Relationships Matter: The First Six Years, which will help parents understand the importance of developing positive relationships in the early years. The Halton District School Board provided funding for the video. It depicts everyday actions that help build these relationships and will be used as a resource for families and for community professionals working with parents and caregivers, along with other resources for discussion. The video is available online at www.ourkidsnetwork.ca with clips of each relationship strategy.

**Desired outcome(s)**
Knowledge transfer: Begin the process of transferring knowledge and understanding of Developmental Relationships to families with young children and professionals. The Asset-Building Table, Halton Parenting Advisory Committee, Early Years Committee, Partners for Children with Differing Abilities, Research Committee and Families for Families should be key partners in implementing this plan.

**Results**
The video is available online at www.ourkidsnetwork.ca along with individual clips of each relationship strategy. Knowledge Mobilization Plan in place. Two media stories on video premiere launch including interview with families.

**Lessons learned**
The video is a product to be used along with other resources and strategies to transfer knowledge about the importance of relationships to child development in the first six years. Great partnerships with Early Years partners in creating the messages and the material to support their use.

### System Navigation Committee
**Co-chairs:** Rebecca Barrows-Vrankulj, Executive Director, Milton Community Resource Centre; Elena DiBattista, Director, Our Kids Network

Plans coordinated access for all families that integrates resources, systems, and services. Reports to Early Years Committee.

### Halton iparent
The Halton iparent Steering sub-committee provides guidance for the continuing development of Halton iparent, an online information resource for families and service providers to find information and resources on programs and services related to healthy, positive child development.
Desired outcomes
Knowledge transfer: Families will use Halton iparent as the website to get the information they need, when they need it. To ensure this, Halton iparent will offer accurate and timely information on parenting and related services. The “searchability” of iparent will ensure plain language and a more intuitive approach to how families can search for listings.
Halton iparent will also become a key tool for community agencies in their work with families.

Results
To date, iparent provides information on parenting programs, child care program information and services for children with differing abilities. Future expansions will include links to Parks and Recreation listings, libraries and children’s mental health supports information.

Lessons learned
One key lesson learned was the necessity to have a specific Halton iparent Steering Committee to oversee the on-going development of this online resource. This reporting structure will provide timely operational decisions and strategic recommendations to CIPC to ensure the continual and thoughtful growth and development of the search resource.

OKN Data Portal
This planning tool is being used more and more by service providers to support planning for children, youth and families. Training continues in community sessions attended by individuals from numerous sectors including: child protection, child care, mental health, education, health, community services, and culture, tourism and recreation.

Desired outcomes
Knowledge mobilization: Halton service providers are using the wide scope of data in the Data Portal in their planning and implementation of services and programs. The use of data to make decisions on supports for children and youth is having an impact their positive development.

Results
Data Portal users have been trained, who in turn have trained others within their organizations. Users report being confident or very confident about their ability to use the Data Portal, and say that they will tell others about the Data Portal.

Lessons learned
Continual promoting of the tool is needed to engage more users. Resources and data require continual updating to be relevant.

School Years Committee (SY)
Co-chairs: Dorothy Barr, Director, Community Health Services, Regional Municipality of Halton; Nicki Glowacki, Vice President of YMCA Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford
Provides strategic direction and planning related to children 6 to 18-years-old. Reports to CIPC.
Facilitates monthly networking forums for service providers participating on the committee. Arranges monthly presentations on issues and topics relevant to school-aged children.

Working groups and initiatives

Bullying Prevention Task Force (BPTF)
Co-chairs: Cindy McClure, Executive Director, Nelson Youth Centres; Andrea Seaver, Public Health Nurse, Regional Municipality of Halton
Improves access to information and resources and creates opportunities for sharing and collaboration with anyone who wants to be involved in preventing bullying. Reports to SY.
School Years Committee continued


transitions working group

- Chery Despoth, Public Health Nurse, Regional Municipality of Halton; Lynne Hanna, Manager, School Years Health, Regional Municipality of Halton

ready set whoa! supporting your teen to thrive, not just survive the transition to high school!

- A 2013-2014 literature review, OKN research, and local stakeholder consultation, revealed that parents require support and specific information to prepare for high school. After a review of existing resources, a package of information (including school-specific) was developed, including a webpage for parents. Each family with a student in Grade 8 in the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board received an envelope.

desired outcomes

- Provide families with children in Grade 8 with information to positively influence students’ during the transition to Grade 9. Research shows that assets drop during this time and promoting asset-building in youth will have a positive impact.

results

- Webpage: 1,662 unique webpage views (June 2015); 7,700 packages distributed; HDSB PIC School Representative Meeting February 26, 2015; webinar with HCDSB PIC June 4, 2015 (445 registrants, 80 attendees that night); 145 views on YouTube.

Lessons learned

- Involvement of key school board partners is fundamental. Approvals are needed from school board superintendents. Parents are receiving this information online. Hosting webinars is a good way to reach parents.

children’s mental health & developmental services committee (CMHDS)

- Co-chairs: Nancy MacGillivray, Executive Director, Halton Children’s Aid Society; Teresa Wilson, Senior Manager, Professional Services, Mental Health Lead, Halton District School Board

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Training

- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is designed to help people change patterns of behaviour that are not helpful such as self-harm, suicidal thinking and substance abuse. A training program, funded by the Knowledge Transfer Fund, in comprehensive DBT was developed for staff across Halton. There were nine days of training from October 2014 to May 2015.

desired outcomes

- Staff provide comprehensive support to children and youth with mental health issues. Increased ability to do group and individual therapy, skills coaching and managing crisis calls.

results

- Fifty staff have been trained from Woodview Children’s Centre, Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK), Nelson Youth Centre, Halton Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Assessment Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT), Joseph Brant Hospital and both the Halton District and Halton Catholic School Boards.

Lessons learned

- Involvement of key school board partners is fundamental. Approvals are needed from school board superintendents. Parents are receiving this information online. Hosting webinars is a good way to reach parents.

Lessons learned

- Services require coordination. Beginning to address how to do this. Committed to expanding training and currently working out how to obtain resources to do this.

Partners for children with differing abilities committee

- Chair: Roxanne Young, Manager, Infant and Child Development Services, Inclusion Services and Behaviour Services, Regional Municipality of Halton

Inclusive School Age Before and After School Programs (SAP)

- Inclusion Services and ROCK Services will work with SAP to increase their ability to support children with differing abilities.

desired outcomes

- SAP will accept children with differing abilities. School age staff will be confident and competent working with children with differing abilities. Both will provide the best experience for children with differing abilities across environments.

results

- Significant increase in the number of children with differing abilities accepted in SAP. Process developed so enhanced staffing resources are available to support Inclusion/ROCK staff, SAP staff and child care supports to work together to increase SAP inclusivity.

Lessons learned

- Children are presenting challenges that cannot be met in a SAP regardless of support level. Alternative models must be explored. FD child care staff capacity-building approaches not appropriate with SAP. High degree of staff turnover, lower level staff skills and knowledge, lack of purpose-built space and time require different approaches. SAP now delivered in an environment that is challenging in consistent space, flexibility of sharing resources and levels of support and collaboration.
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Our Kids Network Community Hubs are local resources for families, schools, and the community to support children, youth, and their parents. Hub Coordinators report directly to the OKN Director.

**OKN Milton Community Hub Team**

Chair: Vanessa Box-Jones, Hub Coordinator

### Milton Youth Awards

A partnership of the Town of Milton and Halton Region, this youth-led initiative honors Milton Youth for their different contributions to their community. Youth are nominated in seven categories at an evening event.

**Desired outcomes**

Milton youth feel that their contributions to their community are worthwhile and appreciated. Promote Developmental Assets with nominated youth and event producers.

**Results**

The Milton Youth Awards Committee (MYAC) produced the annual Youth Awards program, the qualification criteria, created a brochure outlining award categories and scored each application. Five youth were honoured for personal triumphs, diversity initiatives, as well as leadership in the arts, environment and community.

**Lessons learned**

Time management, advertising and promotion, and opening up two new awards to supportive adults/business and also a youth group award helped make the event more successful.

### Milton Hub Backpack Program

Crosstowne Church and the Milton Hub partnered on free backpacks and school supplies for families. Youth from the church filled backpacks with donated school supplies. The program was promoted through the Hub community partners, who referred clients. The coordinator connected the clients to other community services when they received backpacks.

**Desired outcomes**

Partner with other Milton community supports for families with school items that they otherwise couldn’t afford. Support families with community services they may need, but not know how to access. Engage clients in regular contact with the Hub. Promote Developmental Assets with youth through the program.

**Results**

Twenty-eight backpacks were distributed. Families were connected to other needed community supports.

**Lessons learned**

Need for school supplies, clothing and food in Milton. Use an e-flyer to reach community partners at the end of the school year and send summer reminders.
Our Kids Network Community Hubs are local resources for families, schools, and the community to work together to support children, youth, and their parents. Each hub has a team that plans for the local hub and neighbourhood development. Hub Coordinators report directly to the OKN Director.

**OKN Acton Community Hub Team**
Chair: Alison Hilborn, Hub Coordinator

**Early Years Developmental**

**Let’s Work Together: Acton Early Years**

This project was created to respond to local data that indicates a high number of developmentally vulnerable children entering Kindergarten in Acton. The Acton Hub Early Years Committee members come all three elementary schools in Acton and numerous community partners: Community Living North Halton, the Town of Halton Hills, the Acton Hub, Public Health, Halton Region and Links2Care.

The committee approached the issue with two initiatives. A 30-day activity kit for all Senior Kindergarten children that focused on fine and gross motor skills development was sent home. At the same time, each school provided a weekly fun gymnastics program for four weeks for all Kindergarten children to work on their gross motor skill development.

In September the Acton Kindergarten Fun Fair was held, a welcome to your new school event for Acton families with children going into JK or SK. Once again the same partners worked together to help families prepare for the transition to Kindergarten by engaging them with school staff and activities and providing them with early child development information.

**Desired outcomes**
Positively impact the EDI data and educate families with children in the early years about how to prepare your children for Junior Kindergarten. See improvement in at least 20 children who are currently ‘vulnerable’ according to the previous EDI data. Strengthen the relationship between families and schools.

**Results**
Partners’ discussions and planning sessions resulted in motivation and coordinated actions. Approximately 275 people attended the Fun Fair. Committee will continue plan next steps. Partnership outcomes are being monitored, and the results of the “Turning the Curve on EDI Vulnerability in Acton” plan will be seen in the next cycle of the EDI.

**Lessons learned**
Support from each school is important in implementing these initiatives. Working closely with the schools is a critical relationship that requires constant check-ins. The conversations are richer due to school representatives who provide deeper understanding of school culture and dynamics. Making a difference takes time and commitment.

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**OKN Aldershot Community Hub Team**
Chair: Sheila Slattery-Ford, Hub Coordinator

**Youth Community Kitchen**

Due to a partnership with the Fresh Food Box, St Matthews on Plains Church and Aldershot School, with assistance from the YMCA of Burlington, cooking classes for six students are held for one evening per week for six weeks. Students arrive directly from school, have a healthy snack and interact with adult volunteers by playing games and talking. They work with the instructor to prepare a meal and then everyone dines together.

**Desired outcomes**
The last OKN Youth Survey indicated that a majority of Aldershot youth did not believe they lived in a caring community. Young people identified by the school, who benefit from stimulating afterschool activities, learn to cook nutritious meals while engaging with caring adults. Build understanding and belief with the youth that the community cares about them.

**Results**
The youth report having learned about new foods, cooking skills, cooperating together, and interpersonal skills. They liked the support they received from the adults. This is a very popular activity for Aldershot School students.

**Lessons learned**
Sending food home to make family meals proved unrealistic as groceries were too heavy and usually did not become a meal. The volunteers are enthusiastic about their interactions but find the six-week commitment challenging. The young people had had to be taught basic skills such as how to slice vegetables. Selection of the youth needs to be reviewed to prevent stigmatizing participants.

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**Our Kids Network Protocol Partners**

Halton District School Board
ERINOAK KIDS
HMC
Halton Multicultural Council
HALTON CATHOLIC

www.ourkidsnetwork.ca