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Child  
Development  
Centre

**Newsletter**

**April 2021**

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## CDC Update

Just over a year ago, we had to move to remote services for all our families. We were able to adapt fairly quickly, but looking back, it was a stressful time for everyone. While Zoom visits and phone calls will continue to be options for families, we are happy that one year later we are able to see many kids and families in person in Whitehorse and the communities.

As a non-profit organization, we rely on funding from both the Federal and

Territorial governments. In April, core funding for the Child Development Centre moved from Health and Social Services to the Department of Education. We have been working with our new partners to ensure a collaborative and seamless transition. We look forward to working more closely with this fantastic group of people in the coming year.

We are very thankful to once again be receiving funding from the United Way to support our parent groups in 2021/2022 😊.

We will be sending out a family survey in the next few weeks to those people accessing therapeutic services and support. Feedback from families helps us to continue to improve our services. So, if you receive an email with a link to our survey, please take a moment to fill it out. Thanks!!

We would like to welcome Jasmin McMechan, developmental therapist, and Kevin Monk, occupational therapist, who joined our team in March. After their 14 days of quarantine, they were both very happy to dive right into connecting with families.

That's all for now. Hoping the snow will start melting soon.....

~Alayne

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## Parent Story

Raising children is, at the same time, the most rewarding and the most challenging adventure of the human experience. To say having a child with special needs is overwhelming would be an understatement. No one can prepare you for the



emotional rollercoaster that is parenting, or how all-consuming parenting a child who lives with disabilities can be.

When our son Dylan was hospitalized repeatedly as an infant, and diagnosed with a rare genetic syndrome affecting his nervous system, my husband and I knew that we would have a lot to learn and manage to help our son grow and develop to his full potential. We knew that we would have to make adaptations to his environment as well as manage ongoing medical treatments and interventions. To complicate things, employment opportunities had us in the middle of a move from BC to Whitehorse just as we had received a diagnosis for Dylan. I felt lost and lonely as I had left my support network of friends and extended family at a time when we probably needed them most.



A referral to the Child Development Center was made by one of Dylan's specialists at BC Children's Hospital and to my surprise, they worked hard to assemble a team for Dylan so that we would have support immediately upon arriving to Whitehorse. This was unexpected as we had tried to access similar services in BC but were put on long waitlists.

I wasn't sure what to expect at our first appointment but I was hopeful and tried to keep an open mind as I was new to the world of parenting a child with special needs and looking for guidance.

The support we have received through the CDC has exceeded our expectations. Dylan has benefitted from occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language, and developmental therapy. The family centered

approach that our team has taken has been such a great fit for us as we experienced challenges with our other children and within our marriage as we tried to cope with the stressors of our child's disability. Members of Dylan's team have been very flexible with us and invested time observing him in multiple settings such as at our home, preschool and gymnastics class to better understand his needs in our day to day activities and recommend strategies that work beyond the controlled environment at the Centre. Even through the COVID-19 pandemic our team was quick to adjust to the circumstances and temporarily provided us with virtual sessions until it was safe to meet in person again. We never experienced a lapse in consistency when it came to Dylan's therapy.



When I speak with Dylan's therapists, I feel heard and my concerns are validated. Kyla (Dylan's OT) has gone above and beyond with helping us identify our strengths as a family and as individuals, and to help us understand how Dylan interacts with his world in a unique way. She has worked hard to collaborate with different professions to address Dylan's evolving needs and has advocated on our behalf to secure funding for therapeutic equipment that has been very helpful for us at home. Our team has empowered us as a family to support Dylan as he grows and moves through various stages of early childhood, and to increase his capacity to participate in life's activities with his peers. We are so grateful for the CDC's involvement with Dylan's care and I would recommend the CDC to any family experiencing challenges with atypical developmental needs.

Karri Andriashyk (mom of Dylan Collins)

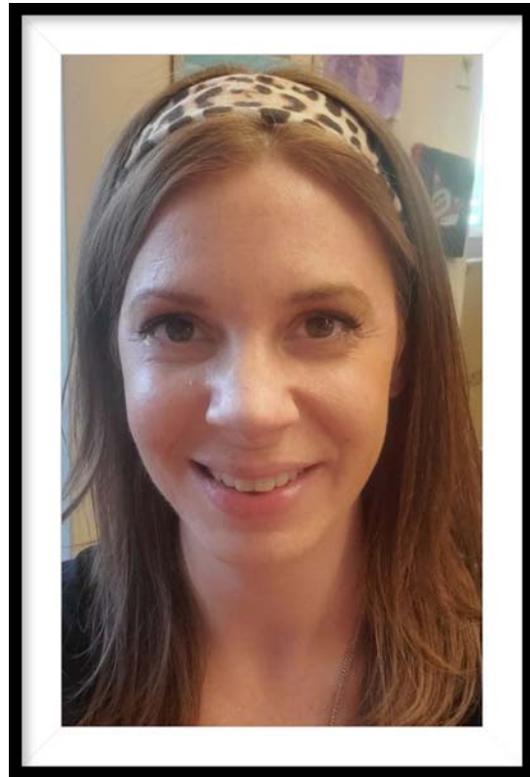
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## **Staff Profile - Jenny Hierlihy**

I was born and raised in Whitehorse and have pretty much lived here all along, except for a couple stints outside the territory for schooling. I am thankful to live in such a beautiful place and feel privileged to raise my family here because the Yukon has so much to offer families with young children.

I first came to work at the Child Development Centre in January of 2010 as the administrative assistant. In 2012, I had my third (and last!) baby and decided to stay home with my little ones for a few years. Then in 2016, the administrative position became available and I jumped at the chance to work here again.

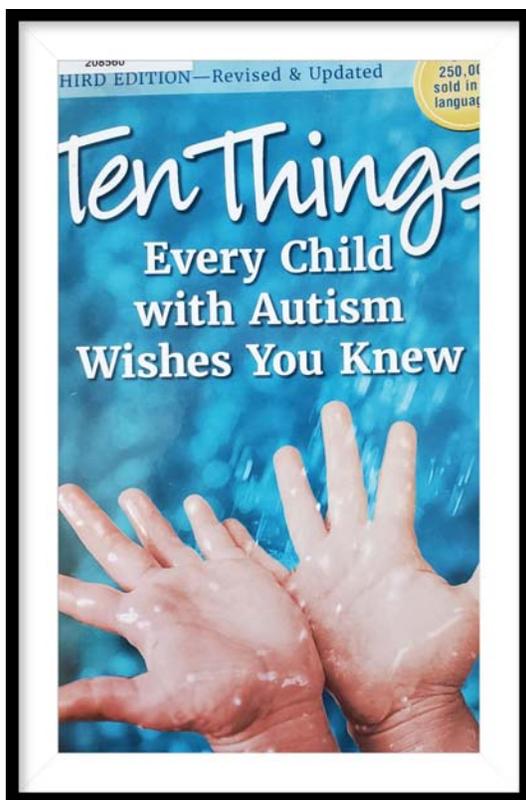
I love my post at the front desk because I get to meet and greet all of our new clients and welcome them to the CDC, and enjoy all the familiar faces over the years, as well! My favourite thing about my job is the interactions with all the families that come here and watching as their children grow from infants to little preschoolers. It has been such a joy! And of course, I get to learn new things



everyday from the therapists I work with.

When I'm not working, I'm usually out walking my dogs along one of the glorious Yukon trails, playing with my kiddos, and working on my podcast, The Friendly Brain.

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## The Book Mark

Ten Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew has informed, delighted, and guided millions of families and professionals since its first edition was published in 2005. This third edition sharpens the child's-view focus on ten core characteristics of autism while expanding on how our own perspectives and actions shape the life of our child and ourselves. In this book you will find a new section which illuminates the breadth of our power of choice and outlines strategies for strong decision-making in every situation. This book is now available to borrow from our library!

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## Did You Know?

**93% of Early Childhood Educators reported they learned something in the professional development sessions that they can use in their work**



**And**

**100% of families who responded to our family survey in Whitehorse, reported increased knowledge as a result of a group or working with a therapist**

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