



Child Development Centre

JUNE 2024



Annual General Report

Our work is about children and their families.

This is one family's story.

When Gray was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), our world turned upside down. Life seemed uncertain, and we were faced with the daunting task of reshaping our reality to accommodate Gray's diagnosis. In the midst of this, the Child Development Centre (CDC) emerged as a guiding light, offering unwavering support, resources, and compassion that helped us navigate this challenging journey. The diagnosis of SMA shook our family to its core. In the midst of this turmoil, the CDC provided us with a safety net, offering support and guidance that allowed us to take a breath amidst the chaos. Their presence reassured us that we were not alone in this journey and gave us the strength to face the challenges ahead.



Navigating the complex web of resources and services available for children with complex needs can be overwhelming. The CDC played a crucial role in filling in the gaps, helping us access the support and assistance that Gray needed to thrive. At the CDC, we found a dedicated team of professionals who were committed to Gray's well-being. From physical therapists to occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and other specialists, each member of the team played a vital role in Gray's journey. What's more, their services were provided without barriers or cost, ensuring that Gray received the care he needed without placing an additional burden on our family.

As Gray graduated from the CDC and entered kindergarten, we were filled with a sense of pride and gratitude for the incredible support we had received. Thanks to the foundation laid by the CDC, Gray is flourishing in school, thriving both academically and socially. The four years from diagnosis to kindergarten were undoubtedly challenging, but with the help of the CDC, we were able to navigate this journey successfully as a family.

Support of organizations like the Child Development Centre make all the difference. For our family, the CDC was more than just a service provider – they were a lifeline, offering support, guidance, and compassion when we needed it most. As we look towards the future, we are filled with hope and gratitude, knowing that the CDC will continue to be a source of support and strength for families like ours. Thank you, CDC, for helping us navigate the journey of SMA with grace and resilience.

Our work

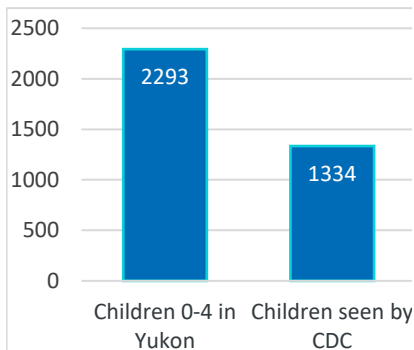
The Child Development Centre has been providing therapeutic services to children and their families across the territory since 1979. This year, we provided services and support to **1334** children and continued to partner with families, service providers and funders to deliver a quality service. Therapies include psychology, speech-language pathology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and developmental/play therapy. In addition, therapy is supplemented by the support of family partners, early childhood therapy assistants, an intake coordinator, a teacher and a diagnostic coordinator. We see children at the Child Development Centre, homes, childcare centres and in the community – wherever suits families best. Our Early Learning Program Support team collaborates with licensed early learning centres in Whitehorse and the rural communities with a focus on the area of inclusive childcare and practices.

“Services seem very unique for each family. I can tell the therapists we work with are really thinking about my child's unique needs, personality and temperament” Parent

Our programs

Data

Total children served July to June 2024.
Yukon stats to December 2023.



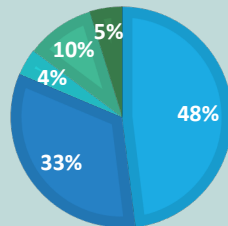
Referrals and services

We had **476** new referrals

- 1st phone calls and 1st visits were offered during the summer
- Parents were largest source of new referrals, followed by health centres and doctors
- Slight increase in new referrals
- Caseloads have continued to rise; monthly caseloads are an average of 9.8% higher than last year, suggesting children are requiring services for longer
- Early Learning Program Support team worked with 53 centres in the territory, an 82% increase from 4 years ago.

CHILDREN WAITING FOR THERAPIST IN WHITEHORSE

SLP 62 DT 43 OT 5
PT 13 PSYCH 6



- At the end of May, there were 119 children waiting for 129 services.
- Of the children listed as waiting to see a therapist, 13 had not had a first visit and 59 were paired with a family partner for services in consultation with a therapist.
- The addition of family partners as **decreased** the number of children waiting after first visits by **46%**.
- Family partners saw 190 children in the follow along program and supported a smooth transition to therapies when children needed more support.



Performance Measures

- **97%** of children achieved or partially achieved their goals.
- **82%** of families said they learned something from therapists they can use at home with their child.
- **86%** said their child is getting what they need from our services vs 70% last year.
- **99%** of families were called within 15 days of referral
- **76%** of families in Whitehorse were offered a first visit with a therapist within 35 days of referral. This is a decrease from last year as we were short therapists.
- **65%** of children identifying as Indigenous were receiving ongoing therapeutic services within 30 days of intake.
- **100%** of ECEs learned something from professional development sessions they could use in their work.
- **94%** of ECE's goals rated with the ELPS team were achieved.

75% of children seen in Whitehorse.
25% of children seen in communities.

29% of all children receiving services identified as Indigenous.

Some of our community partners

Community health centres - First Nation governments – Yukon Government – Council of Yukon First Nations – Family Resource Unit – Child care centres – Partners for Children – Learning Disabilities Association of the Yukon – Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Programs – Early Learning and Child Care Unit – Health Canada – Yukon Education – Family and Children Services – Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team – Children's Disability Services
Yukon First Nation Education Directorate – Autism Yukon – First Nation School Board

Services in rural communities

- Teams made **83** visits to **14** communities this year.
- We provided services to **336** children.
- We had nine early childhood therapy assistants (ECTA) working in the communities providing support to children in between the team's visits. 7 of the ECTAs provided support to children attending early kindergarten.
- We supported **17** children transitioning to kindergarten.
- Teams connected with First Nations and community agencies. Therapists attended community events and fairs, CPNP lunches and hosted parent learning groups such as Handle with Care.



Services in Whitehorse

- We provided services to **998** children residing in Whitehorse.
- **51** children attended one or more sessions through the Therapeutic Preschool. Some of the sessions included a focus on social communication, language, play and kindergarten readiness.
- We supported **59** children transitioning to kindergarten.
- Pediatric clinics with Dr. Smart were scheduled each month with **54** children being seen.
- **294** children were seen for developmental checks in our Follow Along program.
- We were short an OT, SLP, PT and DT for all or part of the year.
- Groups for parents and caregivers were provided: two Hanen programs for parents to support speech and language development and four Handle with Care groups (one for parents, two for group homes, one to train facilitators). We also co-facilitated Mother Goose with a focus on early language.
- Family partners worked with local agencies to offer 8 family events which gave families the opportunity to connect with each other (e.g. prematurity, Autism, medical complexities, hearing differences etc.).
- Staff collaborated with many agencies and participated in group meetings.

Services for Indigenous children in Whitehorse

- We saw **260** children through our Kwanlin Dün and Whitehorse programs.
- 73 of these children were seen through our Follow Along program.
- Staffing shortages made it challenging to provide ongoing services right away.
- Staff collaborated with a variety of agencies and attended monthly drop-ins hosted by YFNED Early years, focusing on different areas of development.



“Knowing there is specialized help for different parts of my child’s development is comforting” Parent

Diagnostic Services

- We had 26 referrals to the preschool diagnostic team this program year.
- The team completed **19** diagnostic assessments: 18 ASD and 1 FASD.
- There are currently **35** children on file waiting for a diagnostic assessment; six of these are currently on hold. All children continued to receive services while waiting.
- Dr. Barbara Grueger retired In June after many years on the diagnostic team. Dr. Grueger was one of the original team trained in 2003 and will be missed. Dr. Smart will be the new pediatrician on the team.
- The diagnostic coordinator attended the CANFASD conference as part of a Yukon Delegation. The coordinator also attended monthly FASD IAC meetings which is working on action items from the 10-year plan.
- We hosted a joint advisory committee meeting for the diagnostics clinics in the territory.

Early Learning Program Supports (ELPS)

- The team was fully staffed with five inclusion coaches and one early learning support worker.
- The team provided a total of **559** visits to early learning centres in Whitehorse and the communities, and an additional 444 visits to work with supported childcare educators.
- They made **55** visits to centres in the rural communities and provided support to ECEs.
- The team collaborated to create goals for individuals and provided follow-up support in the areas of behaviour guidance, sensory and movement, language, inclusion and programming. Seven centres requested support for the physical environment and 19 TPOT assessments were completed.
- Parts of Handle with Care were used with 14 different programs.
- A total of **36** PD sessions were offered, seven of these were in the rural communities. Nine PDs included parts of Handle with Care and over 100 ECEs.
- The ELPS team is continuing to provide more specific assistance to supported childcare educators around goals and inclusion.

"The coach's support was more than I could have asked for. She never made me feel less than, not once." Early childhood educator on ELPS program

"This is a fantastic program. Very helpful for all our staff." Operator on ELPS program.

"I learned a lot of strategies which are very useful in handling different types of learners." ECE on Inclusion PD



Highlights

Structural Renewal: We successfully completed Phase 2 of our plan by adding the role of family partner. As a result, families received services earlier, more Follow Along visits were added and there were opportunities to connect at family events. The family partners consistently met with partner agencies and their coordination role freed up therapist time. They also played a big role in helping our families that were new to Canada navigate systems.

Partnership with Education: We received an increase to our transfer payment agreement which supports our programs, structural renewal plan and a new building. We continue to work closely to support early kindergarten, early learning centres and children moving into kindergarten.

Our Building: We moved into our new building in August which has more therapy spaces and is accessible to all. In September, we hosted a successful open house with over 250 people coming through. We are grateful to the support of YG, Department of Education for the funds that made this new space possible.

Jordan's Principle: With funding to support therapeutic services for Indigenous children in Whitehorse and Kwanlin Dün, we expanded our team. We saw an increase in families accessing services, offered drop in groups and continued to collaborate with community partners.

Play Therapy: We committed to increasing number of staff trained in play therapy and now have 6 therapists with varying level of training and one staff member who can provide supervision in this area.

ELPS: Our early learning inclusion coaches worked with Connecting Canada to increase competency for coaching for inclusion through monthly training and community of practices sessions with coaches from across the country.

Looking ahead

The Child Development Centre successfully completed the second phase of our structural renewal plan with the implementation of the new family partner position. This summer family partners will be working in order to provide continuity of services as well as see families newly referred to CDC. We are looking forward to implementing phase 3 of this plan, which includes adding therapeutic leads to mentor new staff and ensure our practice stays current. We will also be adding the family partner positions in two communities.

We are very excited to implement a new therapeutic preschool model which will provide more goal directed work. Many of the groups will be led by a therapist and supported by an early childhood educator. It will also allow for more hands-on training and coaching to supported childcare educators

We will be preparing for delayed changes to the funding model for the Canadian Action Plan for Children (a funding program through the Public Health Agency of Canada). We believe the projects currently funded through this program will merit continued support.

The leadership team will continue to work with staff on a variety of projects including continued support for caseload management guidelines and updating how goals are created with families. Many staff will be receiving the second level of motivational interviewing (MI) training and we will establish MI champions to support other staff. MI includes important strategies that help families determine their readiness for our supports and empower them to make decisions about what program or support they want for their child.

We look forward to collaborating with our community partners and building new connections with the Yukon First Nation School Board. We will continue to work with The Early Learning and Child Care Unit to support inclusion and of supported childcare educators in the Territory.

In conclusion

After a number of years of upheaval caused by the pandemic and building moves, we have spent the last year focusing on getting back to doing what we do best – working with children and families. We are extremely grateful to the ongoing funding and support from YG, Department of Education that allows us to do our work and to do it in location that meets the needs of the families we see.

When I moved into a management role many years ago, I was worried I would not have the skills to see this organization thrive and move forward. But I quickly realized it was not about one person's skill; it has been about building relationships and a vision with the people who access the services, those that support it and those that provide it. CDC has experienced much change and growth over the last 5 year, always striving to provide something better for children and families. Early intervention continues to fuel the passion of our staff and board, and I am proud to be part of such an amazing organization.

I am honored to work alongside many amazing people and in closing I want to acknowledge the long service of Janine Fryer (5 years), Jessica Hulstein (5 years), Colleen Laking (5 years), Brooke McKenzie (15 years) and Rachel Moser (20 years).

Respectfully submitted by Alayne Squair, Executive Director