



Child Development Centre

Annual General Report

JUNE 2025

Our work is about children and families.

This is one family's story.

The Child Development Centre truly feels like our extended family. They have been with us since the beginning of our daughter's life, watched her grow alongside us and have played a crucial role in who she is today.

Graceyn was referred to the CDC physiotherapy program at just nine months old for plagiocephaly (a flat head) - a common diagnosis that physiotherapists often see infants for. The physiotherapists were noticing that Graceyn wasn't meeting the milestones that a typical nine-month-old should be meeting and had abnormally tight muscles.

As Graceyn grew a bit older, more milestones were not being met as expected, and she was diagnosed with global developmental delay (significant delay in multiple areas of development such as motor, speech, cognitive, social, and emotional). We were not only now seeing physiotherapy but occupational therapy, speech language pathology, and developmental therapy. The CDC reached out to our pediatrician with their observations, and medical investigations began.



Just before Graceyn's third birthday, she got a diagnosis of Myhre Syndrome. An ultra-rare, progressive genetic disorder that affects the connective tissues. Meaning, all systems of her body are affected in one way or another. While there are many medical aspects to this syndrome - muscle, joint, and bone abnormalities are common as well as mild to moderate intellectual disability.

Receiving a progressive, whole-body system diagnosis for your child is life-changing and feels earth-shattering. Through it all, the CDC has been and continues to be so gracious, supportive, compassionate, and caring not only for Graceyn, but for us as her parents as well.

Since there is no treatment for Myhre Syndrome, early intervention with therapies is key to help those with Myhre reach their fullest potential. Graceyn has shown so much progress with where she started to where she is now, and we are truly grateful that the CDC has been there every step of the way (literally and figuratively).

Tayla McNally

Our work

The Child Development Centre started providing services to a handful of Yukon families in November 1979 out of a small trailer behind Selkirk school. Turning 45 this year, we reflect on how our services have grown and on our unwavering commitment to providing family-centered services. This program year (July 2024 - June 2025), we provided services to over 1300 children and families. We feel fortunate that we do not have to do this work in isolation: we partner with families, service providers and funders to provide a quality service.

The Yukon Government continues to provide essential core funding, including support for building costs—an invaluable contribution that enables CDC to focus on delivering services to families throughout the territory. Additional funding is also received through the Canadian Action Plan for Children, Jordan's Principle, and generous community donations.



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, and a diagnostic coordinator. We see children at our centre, family's 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.



"Our input as parents matter."

"Welcoming staff, knowledgeable and supportive."

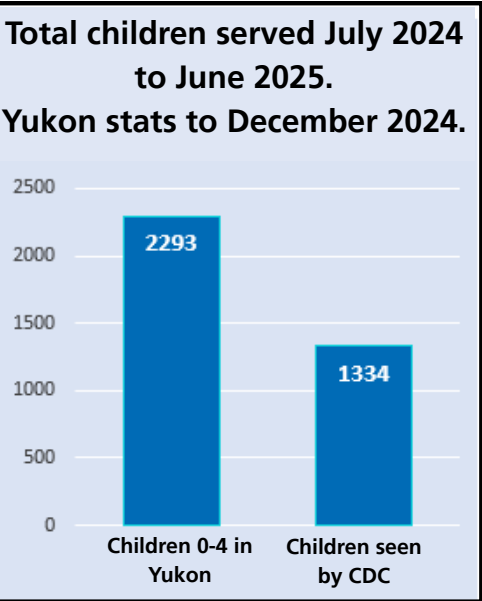
"Flexible to our schedule and extremely accommodating around where and when we have appointments."

"The validation of challenges and constructive approach to addressing them; just knowing there is access to support if needed."

-Parent/caregiver comments from our 2024/25 family survey

Our programs

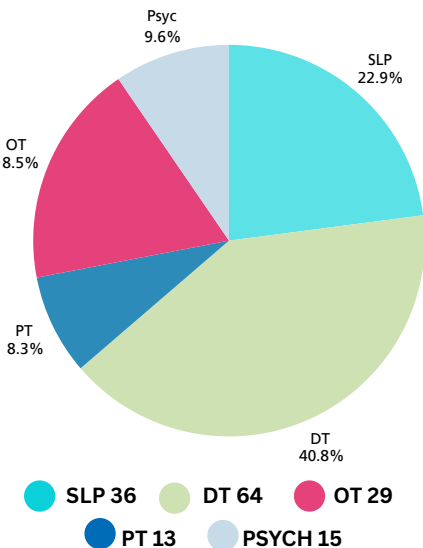
Data



Referrals and services

- We had **465** new referrals.
- 1st phone calls and 1st visits were offered during the summer, **45** first visits were completed.
 - Parents were largest source of new referrals, followed by health centres and doctors.
 - We continued to invest in training play therapists, **92** children received play therapy.
 - External and internal referrals to therapies increased between **17% – 51%**, for 4/5 therapies.
 - The Early Learning Program Support team worked with **49** programs in the territory, and over **76** groups.
 - Family partners saw almost **400** children in the Follow Along Program and supported a smooth transition to therapies when children needed more support.

Children waiting for a therapist in Whitehorse



- At the end of May, there were **136** children waiting for 158 services.
- Of those waiting, **32** are being seen by a family partner for something they were referred for.
- We also piloted a new entry into services system for SLP referrals, so for **36** children waiting:
 - **12** seen and being monitored by a SLP
 - **12** receiving services by a family partner
 - **1** going to kindergarten
 - **11** waiting to see a SLP
- We were short staffed two SLPs and an OT during the program year. We hired an early childhood therapy assistant to help with direct service provision.

Performance Measures

- **98%** of children achieved or partially achieved their goals.
- **92%** of families said they learned something from therapists they can use at home with their child.
- **88%** said their child is getting what they need from our services.
- **98%** of families were called within 15 days of referral
- **90%** of families in Whitehorse were offered a first visit with a therapist within 35 days of referral.
- **93%** of children identifying as Indigenous in Whitehorse were receiving ongoing therapeutic services within 30 days of intake up from 65% last year.
- **99%** 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.

76% of children seen in Whitehorse.

24% of children seen in communities.

31% of all children receiving services identified as Indigenous.

Services in rural communities

- Teams made 73 visits to 14 communities this year and provided services to over 300 children and families.
- We had four early childhood therapy assistants (ECTAs) working in the communities providing support to children in between the team's visits. Three of the ECTAs provided support to children attending early kindergarten.
- This year, we hired our first Family Partner in Dawson City - an important step in expanding our services in this community. Their presence has increased services for families and ECEs, strengthened local connections, and improved community collaboration. After completing specialized training, the family partner brought new skills and knowledge back to Dawson, helping build local capacity through direct support, coaching, and community engagement.
- Teams connected with First Nations and community agencies, collaborating on events in nine of 14 rural communities and offered parent sessions on topics such as temperaments, sensory processing and building trust (Handle with Care) .



Services in Whitehorse

- We provided services to 1030 children residing in Whitehorse.
- Eighty-seven children attended one or more sessions through therapeutic groups. Service providers, along with an early childhood therapist, provided sessions that focused on goals in areas such as communication, social thinking and anxiety.
- We supported 67 children transitioning to kindergarten in Whitehorse.
- Pediatric clinics with Dr. Smart were scheduled each month with 54 children being seen.
- Over 300 children were seen for developmental checks in our Follow Along program.



- We offered a range of programs for parents and caregivers, including:
 - Hanen More Than Words: to support parents in promoting their child's speech and language development;
 - Handle with Care for group home care providers and to train new facilitators: an interactive program designed to promote the mental health of young children;
 - Worry Warriors: for parents of children experiencing anxiety; and
 - Mother Goose: focused on early language development and co-facilitated with Partners for Children.
- Family partners worked with local agencies to offer four family events which gave families the opportunity to connect with each other (e.g. prematurity, Autism, hearing differences).
- In response to the increasing number of young children living in 24-hour out-of-home care, CDC provided targeted support to group home staff through Handle With Care training, early language training, and individualized therapeutic visits. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to building capacity in the community and ensuring that all children receive the care and developmental support they deserve.
- CDC hosted three student placements for occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, and physiotherapy; providing valuable hands-on learning opportunities while supporting service delivery and fostering the next generation of pediatric professionals.



Services for Indigenous children in Whitehorse

- We saw over 270 children through our Kwanlin Dün and Whitehorse Indigenous services programs.
- Ninety-two of these children were seen through our Follow Along program, a 29% increase from the previous year. The remainder of children were seen for therapeutic services.
- This program was fully staffed, allowing nearly all children to access services without delay.
- The team continued to strengthen community partnerships and respond to evolving needs. A notable highlight was being invited to host drop-in programming at the new Family Preservation Wellness Centre—an important recognition of our role in supporting families. We also maintained monthly community drop-ins in partnership with local organizations, including Yukon First Nation Education Directorate - Early Years and the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, offering consistent, accessible support to families where they are.



Diagnostic Services

- We had 34 referrals to the preschool diagnostic team this program year: 29 for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), two for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and three for Complex Behaviour.
- The team completed 20 diagnostic assessments.
- There are currently 34 children on file waiting for a diagnostic assessment; an additional six transitioned to school and were referred to another team.
- Dr. Smart, pediatrician, joined the diagnostic team in September 2024.
- With waitlists remaining high, we completed 10 more than we were originally contracted to provide. Things we did to support more timely access:
 - Developed an alternative approach to ASD assessments in cases where there are strong indicators of a likely diagnosis and families are well prepared.
 - Contracted Whitehorse therapists to help complete assessments.
 - Agreed to coordinate only preschool assessments after 2026.



Early Learning Program Support (ELPS)

- The ELPS team consists of six inclusion coaches and one early learning support worker.
- Despite being short staffed for part of the year, the team provided a total of 942 visits to early learning centres in Whitehorse and the communities to collaborate with educators and enhance supported child care programming.
- They made 43 trips to 13 communities.
- The team collaborated to create goals for children and provided follow-up support in the areas of behaviour guidance, sensory and movement, language, inclusion and programming. A large focus continues to be on encouraging children's mental health in daily interactions and how this impacts participation and learning.
- Seven ECEs requested support to evaluate their environment and completed The Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) assessments with coaches.
- In partnership with the ELPS team, two centres have established leadership teams to increase their use of inclusive practices.
- A total of 25 PD sessions were offered with 311 ECEs attending. Coaches followed up with participants to support them in applying what they learned during the sessions.
- The ELPS team is continuing to provide more specific assistance to supported child care educators around goals and inclusion.
- In June CDC hosted a Celebration of Learning for ECEs and other partner agencies to celebrate ECEs dedication to quality inclusive practices through consistent learning and coaching.

"I think the PD sessions are great and provide us with materials we can practice as well." - Early Childhood Educator

"The coach was approachable and responsive to our needs, offering tailored suggestions and positive reinforcement. This helped strengthen our team's professional growth and enhanced the quality of our program." - Program Operator



Highlights

- **Professional Development:** Throughout the year, our team engaged in a range of learning opportunities, including workshops, training sessions, and conferences, to strengthen service quality and advance best practices. We provided advanced training in Motivational Interviewing (MI) and established champions to facilitate ongoing learning in our MI Circle of Practice. Two members of our leadership team also attended the Children's Healthcare Canada Conference in Ottawa. They returned with valuable insights on incorporating measurement-informed care and advancing cultural safety, drawn from national and international leaders in the field.
- **Technology and Innovation:** This year, we prioritized exploring ways to enhance administrative efficiency through the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI). Staff received training on using AI tools in a safe and ethical manner. In addition, several staff attended technology talks hosted by the BC Association for Childhood Development and Intervention (BCACDI) to stay informed about current innovations and best practices.
- **Framework Implementation:** The CDC successfully secured a \$25,000 grant through the BCACDI Opportunities Fund to implement the CanChild "F-words for Child Development" framework. This strengths-based, family-centered approach aligns with our commitment to holistic early intervention.
- **Lead Positions:** Completing the last phase of our Structural Renewal plan, CDC established part-time lead therapist and program lead positions. These roles will enhance our capacity for continuous learning and innovation, strengthen discipline-specific mentorship, contribute to professional development efforts, and support coordinated resource planning.
- **Engagement with new to Canada families:** Families receiving services this year reflected an incredible diversity, with 35 different languages spoken across enrolled households. To support inclusive service delivery, we accessed translation services and drew on the multilingual skills of several staff members.
- **Therapeutic Groups:** The move to shorter, more goal focused groups was a success. Not only did we provide opportunities for more children to participate, goal achievement was 90%. This format also allowed us to provide more collaboration and coaching with supported childcare workers in attendance.



Looking ahead

- We are very excited to partner on a project funded by the Kids Brain Health Network's Implementation Program Grant, which will enable CDC to receive specialized support from CanChild on effective F-words implementation. This framework focuses on family, friends, fun, function, fitness and future - it summarizes the many dimensions of a child and family's life and sets the stage for a meaningful conversation to develop goals.
- We will once again apply for funding through Jordan's Principle to continue delivering meaningful and timely therapy services to Indigenous children and families. With recent changes to the funding model, we remain hopeful that the importance of our program will be recognized and supported by both communities and government.
- The leadership team, working in collaboration with staff and families, will undertake a comprehensive review of our service entry process. The goal is to develop a more seamless and accessible pathway that ensures children and families receive the right support at the right time.
- The Child Development Centre successfully completed the final phase of its Structural Renewal Plan through the implementation of new Lead Therapist and Program Lead positions. With these roles now in place, we look forward to collaboratively shaping their development—emphasizing mentorship for new staff and supporting excellence through ongoing, evidence-informed practice. With the implementation of this plan coming to an end, we look forward to developing a new Strategic Plan in the fall.
- With our collective agreement set to expire in June 2026, the Board will begin negotiations in the spring. In today's context, ensuring that wages remain competitive will be a key priority, recognizing their critical role in attracting and retaining qualified staff.
- Lastly, we look forward to collaborating with our community partners in order to provide more thorough wrap around services for children and families in the territory. We also hope to continue to work with the Early Learning and Child Care Unit to support inclusion and support childcare educators in the territory.

Some community partners

First Nation governments – Yukon Government Health and Social Services (Family and Children's Services – Child, Youth and Family Treatment Team – Family Resource Unit – Community health centres – Children's Disability Services) – Yukon Government Department of Education (Early Learning and Child Care Unit) – Council of Yukon First Nations – Child care centres – Partners for Children – LDAY Centre for Learning – Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs – Health Canada – Yukon First Nation Education Directorate – Autism Yukon – First Nation School Board

In conclusion

As we close out another year, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge the many people who make this work possible. First and foremost, the families we serve; who continue to show strength, trust, and engagement as we work together. Our staff, who bring the highest level of dedication, skill, and care to their work, consistently going above and beyond to meet the needs of children and communities across the territory. Our partners, including our funders, whose collaboration and investment help extend the reach and impact of our work. And lastly, I want to thank our Board of Directors for their thoughtful leadership and ongoing support of our mission.

Working alongside such committed individuals and communities is both a responsibility and a privilege. I am grateful to be part of this work, and proud that we continue to strive to do better for Yukon children and families.

I want to acknowledge the long service and contributions of Christel Bartczak (15 years), Kyla Flynn (15 years), Sue Herbrick (15 years), Janine Privett (20 years) and Leona Corniere (35 years). Yukon families and children have benefitted from your support and professionalism.

Respectfully submitted by Alayne Squair, Executive Director

