

*Community Profile and Report
on the Healthy Development of Children
in the Downtown Community of
Winnipeg, Manitoba*

*Prepared for the Downtown Parent-Child Coalition
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Summary of the Report

The current project is an initial effort on behalf of the Downtown Parent-Child Coalition to gain an understanding of the child development and family support needs of the residents of the Downtown community. The Coalition hoped that the project could be used to inform them about the most equitable and effective means to distribute funds made available to them by Healthy Child Manitoba to enhance the healthy development of children in the community.

The coalition hired a research team to collect information that would assist them in reaching their goal. Three methods of data collection were utilized. These were:

1. Review of previous community survey and consultation reports
2. Secondary analysis of community data
3. Implementation and summary of a community questionnaire

As opposed to being a final report, the project is intended to be used as a work in progress. That is, the issues introduced in this report and brought to the attention of the Coalition will need to be prioritized and studied more comprehensively.

Several questions about child development and family support needs in the Downtown Community emerged during the data collection and writing phases of this report. These include the following:

- What are the needs of children and their families?
- Are the needs of children and families in downtown being met?
- Do neighbourhood differences exist?
- What are the needs of different sub-populations?
 - Single parents
 - Dual-income earners
 - Children with special needs
 - Aboriginal families
 - New immigrant families
 - Families on social assistance
 - Low-income wage earners
- What other sub-populations should be considered?
- What policies and practices can best meet the holistic needs of children and their families?
- How can the “hard-to-reach” families be reached?
- Do current programs and services adequately and equitably meet the needs of people in different neighbourhood areas?
- Is public transportation readily accessible?
- What kinds of initiatives will build collaboration and foster relationships between members of community, providers and policy-makers?

Questions regarding the organization and functions of the Coalition i.e., team building, prioritizing recommendations/action plans and developing conceptual frameworks or philosophical underpinnings to their projects will also need to be considered prior to embarking on the task of enhancing child development and family support in the community. Questions to consider include the following:

- How will team building/development occur within the Coalition?
- What recommendations will be carried out? In what order?
- Who will carry out these recommendations? How?
- How will the Coalition function to meet the needs of the community (i.e., issues of knowledge transfer, accountability, dialogue/networking)?
- What are the short- and long-term plans?
- How will the activities of the Coalition be evaluated?
- Will the Coalition's activities include fundraising for additional community development activities?

Summary of the Literature Review

Healthy Child Manitoba's commitment to improving the health and well-being of children in the Downtown community are to be recognized through the activities of the Downtown Coalition. This commitment includes a focus on building collaboration and partnership between the community's residents, programs and services. Strategies will include those that target children directly and indirectly through their families. Community is defined as an extension of family and as a mechanism of support to children and their families. In community, resources and opportunities are distributed equitably regardless of personal socio-economic, ethnic, or other characteristics. All residents are made to feel 'belonging' and individual strengths are acknowledged and included in the community's development strategies.

Healthy Child Manitoba encourages the development of activities within the Downtown community that go beyond the boundaries of individual programs and services and meet the needs of community as expressed by its membership. Recall that according to HCM's mandate

A collaborative service delivery philosophy emphasizes such concepts as holism, inclusion, diversity, empowerment and community development. Rather than to add new services to an already overloaded formal support system, this philosophy states that we, as families and communities, must coordinate our resources to support the healthy development of our children. In order to support healthy child development, children and their parents will require a full range of services. The quality and coordination of these services to efficiently meet the diverse needs of children in Manitoba communities is the primary focus of HCM.

The parent-child centered approach encourages new and supports existing community-based programs and activities for children, youth and their families. The approach combines the resources of a particular community within a geographical boundary through partnerships or coalitions between groups from different sectors. Through its various developmental stages, implementation and evaluation, the parent-child centered approach supports existing activities and initiates new activities that reflect each community's diversity, unique needs and strengths.

HCM's four pillars are the focus of healthy child development strategies. These are *parenting, nutrition, literacy and capacity building activities*. These pillars are to be met through several programs and services that target all age, ethnic and socio-economic groups within the Downtown community.

The Downtown Parent-Child Coalition's purpose is to partner with HCM to develop a cohesive and coordinated approach to planning an accessible, inclusive and holistic service strategy for families and children in the Downtown area. Specifically to provide a focus for the collaboration and coordination of activities and services in the community, to share information and resources that assist in supporting and achieving the healthy child and family vision, to coordinate and distribute HCM funds in accordance with the Government of Manitoba's Healthy Child Program and the Coalition's vision and values, and to research, plan, and implement a healthy child strategy in the Downtown community.

The literature review provides background information to assist the Coalition in realizing their purpose as outlined above. The information allows for a broad conception of health and human development, one that is dependent upon environmental conditions, economics, and political and social circumstances. Determinants of healthy child development discussed in the report include characteristics of individuals, families, and neighbourhoods. Components of the community's infrastructure i.e., social support, recreation opportunities, support for literacy and training as well as an acknowledgement of the struggles parents experience in trying to manage conflicting responsibilities (e.g., employment, childcare, caring for other members of the family, i.e., aging parents, family members with special needs/disabilities) are also discussed in the report in terms of their effects on healthy child development. Each of the determinants of health is discussed in some detail to assist the Coalition in deciding upon the strategies that will contribute to the health and development of children and their families.

Summary of the Community Profile

The community profile was developed with the following questions in mind:

- ❖ What are some of the characteristics of the residents of Downtown?
- ❖ What types of programs and services are offered to enhance child development in Downtown?
- ❖ Are all of the community's members benefiting from whatever the community has to offer?
- ❖ Are resources and opportunities equitably distributed amongst residents?

Using tables, graphs and maps – a profile of the Downtown community was created. The information profiled focuses on factors or determinants of healthy child development.

Each of these factors can in turn be analyzed to discover strategies for the enhancement of healthy child development and family support in the community.

The profile information is summarized as follows:

- The Downtown community membership includes a healthy workforce population. This means that there are more people between the ages of 19 and 64 than there are in either of the dependency age groups.
- The membership of the community includes people from diverse ethnic and religious groups. This diversity includes long-time residents and recent immigrants to Canada as well as different language and cultural backgrounds.
- In comparison to the city of Winnipeg, Downtown residents are, on average, far less educated. For instance, more than half of the Downtown population has attained no more than a grade 12 education.
- More than half of the residents of Downtown live below the poverty line. Most of these include families with young children.
- A greater proportion of people living in Downtown are unemployed compared to the City of Winnipeg.
- Public transportation is unevenly distributed throughout the community. Fewer connections are made for people residing in the west end of the community. This fact negatively affects community participation opportunities of elderly people and families with young children.
- Most of the schools are located in the central region of Downtown.
- Child development and family support programs are located throughout the community. Their distribution is not even – revealing a shortage of programs in the Minto, Wolseley and Sergeant Park neighbourhoods.
- There are more childcare programs in the eastern region of the community. Taking the high populations of young children from the Daniel Macintyre, St. Matthews and Wolseley neighbourhoods into consideration, these neighbourhoods seem to have too few childcare facilities.
- Family resource programs are heavily concentrated in the eastern region of the community. Fewer programs are available in the Minto, Sergeant Park and St. Matthews neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods seem to require more of this type of program, for instance Daniel Macintyre has the greatest proportion of young children and St. Matthews and Wolseley have the highest proportions of single parent families.
- The greatest proportion of Aboriginal families residing in Downtown live in the Daniel Macintyre, St. Matthews, Spence and West Broadway neighbourhoods. The needs of Aboriginal families must be clearly understood due to the special circumstances of transience to and from the reserve community and the urban center, education and employment, language and culture. Representing both the needs and strengths of this population will depend upon their inclusion into all facets of program and service delivery (i.e., social, education, economic and political) in the Downtown community.
- Recreation programs are unevenly distributed throughout the community. Most of the programs are situated in the eastern-central neighbourhoods (Daniel

- Macintyre and Spence) and least in the southwest and southeast neighbourhoods (Minto, sergeant Park and Wolseley).
- The majority of single parent males residing in Downtown live in the Daniel Macintyre neighbourhood. This population is often overlooked in research and community development plans.
 - Gaps and overlaps in program and service delivery are evident through the maps. The breakdown of programs into types further emphasizes the inequity of the distribution.
 - There is a shortage of adult education and literacy opportunities especially for residents of the Daniel Macintyre neighbourhood. This is notable in comparison to the lower levels of educational attainment among the residents of that neighbourhood.
 - Daniel Macintyre, St. Matthews and Wolseley neighbourhoods have the highest proportions of single parent families in the community and the fewest number of childcare programs.
 - The greatest proportion of the crime in Downtown occurs in the Daniel Macintyre and Spence neighbourhoods. Alternately, these neighbourhoods have the highest populations of young children and few family support and childcare programs.
 - Domestic violence is highest in the Daniel Macintyre neighbourhoods. This is particularly significant when considering the high population of young children.
 - Although unemployment is an issue for all Downtown neighbourhoods it is greatest for Spence residents.
 - Mobility i.e., moves from residence to residence is quite common for people living in Downtown. Mobility is highest in the Daniel Macintyre, Broadway/Assiniboine and Wolseley neighbourhoods. Housing availability and quality, neighbourhood safety, green space, social supports, employment and education opportunities are all factors in residential security.

Summary of the Community Questionnaire

The information collected from the questionnaires included the voices of 77 parents/residents of the Downtown community. Most of the respondents were participants of community programs and/or utilized financial and other support services offered in downtown neighbourhoods. Issues of community discussed include neighbourhood safety, places for children and families to relax and play, friendliness and trustworthiness of family, friends, neighbours and service providers in the community, thriving businesses, and the availability, accessibility and utilization of supports. Specific programs attended by the respondents are listed. Profile information is described and displayed in a table.

Through the collection and analysis of the material presented in this report, the researchers and the Action Committee of the Downtown Parent-Child Coalition suggest the following recommendations for consideration:

Project Recommendations

Recommendation No. 1 – The Child Development Information System

A government's ability to govern its citizens rests upon the strength of its surveillance systems. Surveillance systems allow governing bodies and policy makers to know the details of their citizens. For example, it allows them to know:

- a. Who its population is (demographics)
- b. Projected growth of the population
- c. Where they are located
- d. What their needs are
- e. What they have (resources, skills, etc.)
- f. Leadership and development capacity of the people
- g. The location of programs and services for the enhancement of child development
- h. Structures and functions of the community's organizations
- i. Cohesiveness and communication of the population

The Downtown Parent-Child Coalition should adopt this type of mechanism in order that they will be able to know these details about their population. Knowing these details will allow the Coalition to carry out strategies that will support the community in enhancing the healthy development of all of its children.

The mechanism that is recommended here is the *Child Development Information System (CDIS)*. With the CDIS, the Coalition will be able to collect, organize and use comprehensive data on the structural organization of the Downtown community. As well, the CDIS will allow the Coalition to organize data collected from surveys distributed to parents of children in the community on issues of program and service availability, accessibility and utilization. Other data can be collected as needed. The information system will allow data to be collected over time. Historical data can be utilized to inform policy and practice and to conduct both process and outcome evaluations. Once developed, the CDIS can easily be updated and administered with little time or technical expertise.

It is further recommended that the Coalition propose to HCM that they develop the CDIS to collect, analyze, interpret and communicate child development information to Coalitions throughout Manitoba. The CDIS is the best means to accomplish the HCM's goals as described in the first section of this report.

Recommendation No. 2 – Downtown Community Survey

The current report sheds light on several determinants of healthy child development in the Downtown community. Some of the determinants of healthy child development affect children directly while others affect families that in turn affect their children. It is recommended that the Downtown Parent-Child Coalition carry out a *Community-Wide Survey* to parents of children regardless of whether or not they attend community

programs. The survey should investigate issues of availability, accessibility and utilization of community programs. Other survey questions may include:

- a. Barriers to obtaining health, education, recreation and social services
- b. Population demographics – cultural/linguistic, special needs
- c. Perceptions of the quality and relevance of programming
- d. Suggestions for improvement of community programs, etc.
- e. Other ideas for fostering child development (babysitting or work/education cooperatives, creating community green house projects, literacy/tutorial strategies, grandparents in the schools initiatives, etc)

Several *methods of distribution* are possible. These include the following:

- a. Door-to-door interviews
- b. Phone interviews
- c. Leaving surveys with program coordinators and service providers (e.g., doctor's offices, hairdressers, etc.). Remember, coordinators and service providers will need to be convinced about the value of your mission!
- d. Neighbourhood meetings
- e. Focus groups
- f. Survey through the schools. (Schools need time to take your survey to their councils, etc. for approval. Plan meetings with school administrators well in advance – they can be your best partners if you convince them that the survey will not interfere with their agendas, that you will include their agendas, that teachers workloads will not be disrespected, that the survey is ethically sound and interesting enough for parents to want to participate and that it is of benefit to the children).

Child development is a huge research area. Topics of interest can include pre-natal, infant, preschool, school-age, and youth healthy development. Within each of these age groups topics may include cultural differences, exceptionalities/special needs, health, education, and/or poverty. Different developmental stages may include several related issues. For example, a focus on youth may lead the Coalition to investigate the following areas:

- a. Education, training and employment opportunities
- b. Street Youth
- c. Child physical, sexual or psychological abuse
- d. Poverty
- e. HEP C
- f. Community safety/gang violence
- g. Sex education and support
- h. HIV/Aids
- i. Leadership training/capacity development/youth participation in community development

The survey responses should be added to the CDIS to allow for the analysis of the relationship between program infrastructure and residents' perceptions of programming availability, accessibility, relevancy and utilization. Regular updating of the CDIS with community information will provide the Coalition with a knowledge of Downtown that is essential for community planning and the enhancement of healthy child development.

The Coalition should engage in *priority setting exercises* in order to come to agreement on areas of concern and the order in which these will be studied and supported in the community. The Coalition should consider hiring a person to write proposals to raise additional funds so that each of the priority areas will be adequately researched and supported.

Recommendation No. 3 - Dissemination and Sharing of Information

Information is only useful to those who are aware of and can access it. Community developers today are struggling with the question of how to disseminate information so that it is accessible and utilizable to the community. The program information that was collected in the current report can be useful to community members in raising their awareness regarding the following issues:

- a. Factors that contribute to and detract from healthy child development
- b. Structural organization of community programs and services
- c. Perceptions of community parents regarding program availability, accessibility and utilization
- d. The existence and mission of the Downtown Parent-Child Coalition
- e. Possible areas for involvement in community planning in child development and family support

The Coalition should plan to share information on healthy child development through regular scheduled *neighbourhood meetings*. Regardless of whether the meetings draw in 2 or 20 neighbourhood residents, they are an excellent opportunity to communicate with and incorporate the ideas of Downtown community residents. Through this method, the Coalition will incorporate an ongoing means of communication back and forth from policy makers (HCM, the Coalition, and others) and community residents. Together the Downtown Community can truly endorse participatory strategies for health and community development.

Recommendation No. 4 - High School Community Research Scholarship Program

The Coalition may wish to coordinate with local schools and universities to develop the following *High School Community Research Scholarship Program*. The program is a great way to encourage leadership and raise awareness of youth regarding local child development issues.

The scholarship program can be brought into secondary school classrooms throughout the community. The Coalition can work in conjunction with school administrators to develop the scholarship program. The program may include the following:

- a. An intensive, two week research education program or workshop for students in their last year of secondary school.
- b. The workshop may include research theory, methodology and a review of child and community health and development research.
- c. The workshop may also include discussion from the students on issues in child and community development that are of interest to them.
- d. The students would be responsible for carrying out a research project on a relevant topic in the Downtown community.
- e. The students would have opportunities to present their work to their schools and to the Coalition.
- f. The Coalition may take advantage of practicum opportunities with Winnipeg universities and colleges to enlist the support of students in relevant disciplines i.e., Child Care/Development, Human Ecology, Education, Nursing, Social Work, and Community Health Sciences.
- g. A coordinator hired by the Coalition may oversee the Program in the schools and offer supervision and support to practicum students.

Topics students may feel passionate about and are of interest to the Coalition include:

- a. Graffiti – Balancing Individual Expression with Public and Private Property Rights
- b. Wheelchair Access in the Downtown Community
- c. Homelessness
- d. Green space, play space, and safe space for children and families

Student research can be presented in various forms. For example:

- a. Reports
- b. Dramas
- c. Videos
- d. Photography

The Program may include opportunities for students to conduct workshops (i.e., pass on the teachings) to elementary school students. Through the Program, the Coalition may wish to offer a scholarship award to graduating students to encourage advanced studies in child health and community research.

The Coalition is advised to discuss this recommendation for a scholarship program with high school administrators. The researcher is aware of and has participated as an instructor in similar types of programs offered to students of R.B. Russell and Argyle Alternative High Schools.

Recommendation No. 5 – Proposal Driven Support of Community Programs for Healthy Child Development

All of the above recommendations should be considered in carrying out the *proposal driven support of community programs for child development* in Downtown. The priority areas should be considered in terms of the information collected through HCM's Child Development Information System, surveys and discussions with community members. It is important that the information is shared with community residents, program and service providers through reports, community meetings, and other media. This way, priorities are set collaboratively between the Coalition, providers and community residents. The community is working together on a common vision.

Requests for proposals (RFPs) will include the following principles:

- a. The coalition will utilize the information collected to inform priority areas for proposal requests.
- b. Community groups will show how the information was utilized in their proposals.
- c. The RFPs will be advertised widely throughout Downtown neighbourhoods through community meetings with residents, providers and policy-makers.
- d. RFPs will be reviewed by the Coalition with an interest in building community partnership and collaboration first. How a child development strategy is carried out is of utmost importance and will be considered in terms of its partnership building capacity.
- e. The Coalition will review proposals and suggest partnerships between stakeholders (different programs and services, residents of different areas, etc) in order to develop capacity in Downtown.

In this way, the Coalition will work as a body to develop community. Collaboration and coordination of services is a central determinant of health. All of the programs and services of the Downtown community must have opportunities to express themselves, their missions and to work together in meeting their goals. The coalition is in a position to build stronger partnerships between programs and to assist in funding groups to meet common goals.

Recommendation No. 6 – Downtown Parent-Child Coalition Capacity Development/Team Building

The design and implementation of the above recommendations can best be carried out through the development of the Coalition's capacity to function as a group. Although the Coalition's membership includes individuals most knowledgeable and experienced in the areas of child health, development and family support, the membership faces obstacles in relationship to time and energy (i.e., other employment, community development and family responsibilities).

The Coalition should take advantage of *capacity development and team building* education. The type of education we refer to here refers to ideas that assist in planning

and implementation of activities/strategies that promote the best interest of children and their families in community through realistic expectations on the Coalition's membership. For example, such questions may be explored:

- a. How can the membership's time best be utilized?
- b. How can the Coalition support individual members in balancing work, volunteer and family responsibilities)?
- c. What benefits are there to being a member of the Coalition?
- d. How can the group's cohesion be strengthened?
- e. Who will carry out the work of the Coalition (i.e., a coordinator/fund raiser/communications officer)?

Through the capacity development process, the Coalition can develop short- and long-term goals, priority areas, roles and responsibilities of individuals and the group, and accountability measures.

Benefits to the members of the Coalition may include

- a. recognition of community work
- b. education and training opportunities
- c. exchange program opportunities to observe and participate in programs in and out of the province of Manitoba
- d. awards/luncheons with community recognizing community work and advertising further opportunities for involvement to other community residents
- e. development of community leadership/advocacy skills

The Coalition is in a perfect position to offer residents opportunities to get more involved in community initiatives for the enhancement of child development and related issues. Healthy child development depends upon the collaborative work of as many of the community's members as possible!

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Healthy Child Manitoba.....	2
Parent-Child Centered Approach.....	3
The Downtown Parent-Child Coalition.....	6
The Coalition’s Purpose.....	7
Literature Review.....	8
The Population Health Perspective.....	8
Health.....	9
Indicators of Health.....	9
Determinants of Healthy Child Development.....	9
Physical and Social Environments.....	10
Family Environments.....	10
<i>Nurturing the Child</i>	11
<i>Positive Care Giving</i>	11
<i>The Care Giving Crunch</i>	12
<i>Child Poverty</i>	12
Neighbourhood Environments.....	13
<i>Childcare</i>	14
<i>Childcare for Children with Special Needs</i>	15
School Environments.....	16
The Impact of Recreation and Physical Activity.....	17
Community Recreation and Parental Health.....	18
‘Active Living’ and Supportive Strategies for Communities.....	19
Summary of the Literature Review.....	21
Community Profile.....	23
Summary of the Community Profile.....	52
The Coalition’s Community Questionnaire.....	55
Design.....	55
Profile of the Survey Respondents.....	58
Perceptions of Community.....	59
Cost of Living.....	60
Social Support.....	60
Participation of Community Programs.....	60
Barriers and Benefits of Program Participation.....	63
Suggestions for the Improvement of Programs.....	64
Summary of Information from the Questionnaires.....	65
Project Recommendations.....	67
Conclusion.....	73
Bibliography.....	74