

Kindergarten  
every kid matters



At OACRS we envision an Ontario in which ALL children have the best opportunity to achieve their full potential

## Making Investments Count!

In April 2010, Minister of Children and Youth Services, Laurel Broten announced \$9 million in new annualized funding for Children's Treatment Centres (CTCs) in Ontario. From the moment this announcement was made CTCs set out to ensure that the Province's investment would make a significant difference in the lives of children and families. We are proud to say we are on the right track! Wait lists and wait times are decreasing; more children and families are benefitting from vital supports and valuable jobs have been retained and created in communities across Ontario.

### From a Service Provider

*CTC enhances social work complement with new government funding...*

As a Clinical Manager of Infant and Preschool services, it is my responsibility to allocate funding where it can have the most benefit to families and children. Given the high numbers of children referred to us, including many being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders, a key service area that needed enhancement was support available to families with a newly-diagnosed child. With the additional funding, we were able to respond to the needs of these families so that they

can cope effectively and efficiently with the challenge of navigating the system of supports and services for children with autism.

### From a Parent

I want to thank you so very much for everything you've done for Justin. We are so happy with Justin being at the children's center. We've seen a big improvement in him already. He's talking up a storm at home and he's learned to tell me all of the letters in his name now! This is exactly what he needed and I could not imagine the situation we'd be in if it weren't for you looking out for us! How can I thank you?

### From an Executive Director

*CTC Assessing Kids Sooner...*

As a result of the increased funds, we have been able to get children assessed and treated sooner. This has benefitted children and families and allowed us to support our partners in the community by being more responsive. Overall the investment is allowing us more flexibility to be responsive to the many different facets of the system at both an agency and community level.

### From a Volunteer Board Member

This investment of money is very welcomed. Our Board was facing growing waitlists and the possibility of needing to cut services. This infusion of money is significant for our centre to continue to provide quality services to our community.

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*Impact at Children's Rehabilitation Centre – Algoma  
In 2007 and again in 2010, Children's Rehabilitation Centre  
Algoma benefitted from new investments. All of the staff  
pictured here have been hired since 2007. They are shown with  
their families. A good news story for Sault Ste Marie!*

## Impact on Jobs

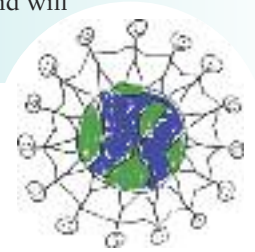
The Government's investment has paid dividends, not only in getting services to kids faster, but in retaining and creating valuable, skill based jobs. We estimate that Province wide, at least 100 jobs will be impacted by the new funds.

With annualized investments, centres are able to plan for the longer term. Centres work to stabilize services and expand and/or enhance programs. Often this means that staff positions are maintained, temporary staff may become permanent and new positions are created. This increase in job stability has a direct impact on local economies particularly in rural and northern regions of the province. Staff are purchasing homes, beginning families and setting down roots. Community Boards report that this kind of investment has a positive impact on staff retention and overall staff satisfaction. All are important factors in keeping highly skilled paediatric specialists in the field and geographical area.

*For children and families  
one full-time Occupational  
Therapist means that 86  
children will continue to be  
served, and 524 visits will  
be maintained.*

## Children's Rehabilitation Information System Project (CRISP)

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has supported twelve OACRS' members with a one time investment of \$2.5 million to implement a modernized, family focussed electronic client information system. An innovative partnership has been developed with GoldCare to enhance our capacity to serve children and families by allowing multi-disciplinary teams to conduct assessments, develop an integrated plan of care, share important information, view clinical notes and monitor each child and family's progress. This clinical software will support front line clinical team members to be more administratively efficient, will ease confusion and frustration for families and will increase overall operational efficiency.



## Support for Full-Day Kindergarten

The Ontario government is planning for 250,000 young Ontarians to enter Full-Day Kindergarten by 2015. Educators and economists agree: this investment will give our children the necessary skills to build a stronger Ontario.

Commencing in September 2010, Ontario's schools welcomed children into the Full-Day Kindergarten program. This is an exciting start to this bold new program. However, children with extra-ordinary needs, children such as those we serve in CTCs, are under-represented in these early numbers.

OACRS is concerned to learn that some parents are opting to keep their child out of Full-Day Kindergarten, even when the option exists in their home school. Parents tell us of their fears for the transition to the school environment. They feel they are having to choose between valuable therapy supports and the opportunity for Full-Day Learning. The specialized therapy supports are critical for the development, well-being and potential of their children. If those supports do not follow a child into the classroom, the child is not able to take full advantage of what the government is offering. Parents ask us why they have to make this difficult choice: school or therapy. Recognizing the dilemma, OACRS cautions the government that the time to act is now – during the implementation of Full-Day

Kindergarten. Effective planning will ensure that no unintended barrier is placed in the way of children with special needs. Thoughtful transitioning will allow ALL children to be welcomed into their neighbourhood schools with their siblings and peers. The caution is real, however the solution is simple!

### Early Leaders on Early Learning!

Recognizing the “school vs. therapy” dilemma, several communities in Ontario have taken up the challenge. In partnership, several Children’s Treatment Centres (CTCs), neighbourhood schools, school boards and municipalities committed to designing and implementing effective and seamless transition to kindergarten for children in need of specialized supports.

The school is considered to be the first choice for the delivery of service, with an emphasis on classroom support. The pilots embrace collaboration with teachers and therapists for the integration of therapy and teaching strategies. The CTC provides occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech-language therapy for children with complex, moderate and mild needs.

In the counties of Kent, Lambton and City of Kawartha Lakes the goals of these initiatives include: continuity of services for current clients of Children’s Treatment Centres; early intervention for newly identified children; encouragement of parent engagement and building strong relationships with school staff.

Services are built on the principles of Early Intervention, Family-Centred Service and a Life Needs Model of integration of services to improve client outcomes.

#### Early results are encouraging:

- Increased ability of the child to learn and participate in the classroom; children are more receptive to both services and education
- Enhanced family engagement – less missed appointments, services are brought as close to home as possible
- Stronger community relationships between providers
- A community wide vision integrating teaching and therapy
- More children being identified and treated sooner.



#### The Numbers:

- These pilot programs are providing supports to 29 schools
- Currently supporting 306 kindergarten kids
- 52 new children have been identified and served sooner.
- Partners include: various school boards (separate & public), municipalities

These initiatives are small in number and relatively low in cost. The positive outcomes are evident for children, for families, for educators and for service providers. Currently, these partnerships are considered to be pilot projects. Resources are not available to maintain and extend this valuable support as the number of sites and children enrolled in Full-Day Kindergarten continues to grow.



Inspired by the Government’s vision of early learning for ALL, OACRS is committed to ensuring that no child is left behind. To fully realize the success of the Early Learning program, we propose that the government allocate \$15 million annually of the planned \$1.5 billion expenditure to support full inclusion and enhanced readiness to learn for children in need of special support.

The investment of 1% of the total expenditure for children with special needs will deliver effective transitions and better long term outcomes.

Collectively, over the next five years we have the opportunity and the will to reduce barriers to inclusion by planning for optimal transition from pre-school to school environments thus enhancing child development and readiness to learn. The key to successful school involvement for children with physical, developmental and communication challenges requires an integrated and comprehensive continuum of services, including vital rehabilitation services that can accompany the child into the new environment. Thus, all children can take their rightful place with their peers.





# Kindergarten Dreams Come True

## **Emily was as excited as any child would be about starting school in September 2010.**

Four year old Emily has delays in her development so starting kindergarten also meant that she needed a support network that could keep her on track for day-to-day learning. Emily began receiving services from her local Children's Treatment Centre at the age of 2. Since this time, her family and her service team have worked together to develop her motor skills, independence in daily living, speech, and language readiness skills, all in preparation for school. So for kids like Emily, starting JK means more than just showing up on the first day of school with a new backpack.

Emily's mom and dad wanted her to go to school with her siblings. They enrolled her in their neighbourhood school which was now offering Full-Day Kindergarten. Her parents needed a plan to successfully transition Emily to Full-Day Kindergarten while being able to continue with the therapy that is so important to Emily's progress and development. Doing therapy during the evening hours didn't seem appropriate as Emily, like most 4 years olds, is tired after a full day at school.

Thanks to a pilot project between her neighbourhood school and the Children's Treatment Centre Emily is getting the special supports she needs to be successful in Kindergarten. Her rehab therapy is integrated into the classroom; the occupational therapist is helping her learn to independently use the washroom and to put her coat on, as well as to hold a crayon

and complete pre-printing strokes. The physiotherapist has consulted with the classroom teacher to incorporate strategies into the gym class to facilitate development of balance and motor skills. A Speech and Language Pathologist is helping Emily to learn sounds and rhyming in preparation for reading. She is learning to express herself in sentences and speak clearly, so she is understood by her peers. She is accomplishing more goals in an inclusive environment and the strategies from all three disciplines are being implemented into activities for the whole class that will lead to her overall success in school.

Emily's mom says the approach has been very effective, and she is especially pleased to have the classroom teacher, ECE and principal so excited to have Emily in their school. With everyone working together, it is making even more of a difference to Emily's progress.

"Emily has been well served by the pre-school system, but without the support of the Children's Treatment Centre working collaboratively with the school we would not have been able to take advantage of the Full-Day Kindergarten."

Her teacher reports that the services provided by the therapists have helped her to better understand Emily's challenges, and have assisted her in adapting her regular program to teach to Emily's strengths. Emily is not only able to take advantage of the new Full-Day Kindergarten program, she is making friends. Last week, Emily was invited to her first birthday party!