

## Preface

Children's Services is excited to be embarking on a new journey towards early years program excellence, with "Early Years Engage – Continuous quality improvement in Waterloo Region" (Early Years Engage). Based on a Total Quality Management (TQM) model, the goal is to create a high quality early years system where quality is embedded into all organizational processes at both the system level and program level.

The Total Quality Management (TQM) model is comprised of the following key elements:

<b>Total</b>	Quality Management involves everyone and all processes
<b>Quality</b>	The degree to which the service meets or exceeds customer expectations
<b>Management</b>	How the organization will support staff to achieve expected outcomes
<b>(Total + Quality + Management = Total Quality Management)</b>	
<b>TQM</b>	A way of thinking about continuously improving the quality of processes and outcomes.

Early Years Engage supports programs to participate in a continuous process of reviewing practices, developing short and long-term plans for growth, operationalizing work plans and evaluating progress against "Our Vision for Quality in Waterloo Region" ("Our Vision") and system priorities.<sup>1</sup> The new approach recognizes that programs will be at different starting points as they begin this journey, but that all programs<sup>2</sup> are moving in the same direction – toward coherence with "Our Vision".

"Our Vision" will serve to guide the long term vision for the Early Years Community and the experiences of families and children who are engaged in the system. "Our Vision" was developed through a unique partnership with the City of Hamilton. Children's Services staff collaborated with City staff to complete a comprehensive review of approaches, including a wide-ranging literature review and gold standard practices in other fields, as well as a consultative process which gathered perspective from fourteen Municipalities. From this work, the conceptual framework was developed.

It was then vetted through the respective early year's communities and a number of early years sector experts representing post-secondary institutions, Provincial Ministries and lead researchers in the Early Learning and Child Care field. As a result of this broad consultation and application of leading practice "Our Vision" was refined and will be used to guide implementation and as a benchmark to evaluate organizational progress with quality. The initial implementation of Early Years Engage will be phased

in over a three year period. It is anticipated that once these initial phases are complete there will be ongoing refinement to the approach as the early years system continues to experience and respond to significant change within the sector.

“Our Vision” utilizes the Eight Elements of Quality from *Quality by Design* (based on the work of Friendly and Beach, 2005). The eight elements: Ideas, Governance, Infrastructure, Planning and Policy Development, Financing, Human Resources, Physical Environments, and Data, Research and Evaluation have formed the framework for Early Years Engage and help to convey the broad scope of this new approach.

Children’s Services is excited about this new journey and the opportunity to work more closely with system partners to build upon the strong foundations of: commitment; dedication; and collaboration that exist in Waterloo Region. Together, “Our Vision” can be realized.

- <sup>1</sup> Through community collaboration priorities are identified to guide strategic planning and in some cases manage the distribution of funding. Priorities are referenced in the multi-year Early Years Services Plan.
- <sup>2</sup> The Early Years Service System includes all Early Years programs and services that have a Service Agreement with Children’s Services: licensed centre-based child care programs, licensed home-based child care agencies, special needs resourcing agencies (KidsAbility, KW Habilitation Services and Family and Children’s Services), and in 2018, the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres