



**Oxford County
Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre
Community Needs Assessment and Initial Plan**

September 2017



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1.0 Introduction

In February 2016, the Ministry of Education announced its intention to transform Ministry-funded child and family programs into an increasingly integrated, cohesive system of services and supports for children ages 0 to 6 and their parents/caregivers known as Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). On January 1, 2018, the County of Oxford will become responsible for the local management of OEYCFCs as part of its responsibility for the service system management of child care and other human services. As part of this process, the County is required to submit a community needs assessment and initial plan to the Ministry of Education.

Currently, the Ministry of Education funds four child and family programs, including Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs), Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs), Child Care Resource Centres, and Better Beginnings Better Futures programs. Two of these programs (OEYCs and PFLCs) operate in Oxford County.

This document provides a summary of the community needs assessment that was undertaken to inform the development of the OEYCFC initial plan. This needs assessment involved the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders, including parents/caregivers, children, service providers, school boards, the current OEYC provider, and other community partners. The needs assessment resulted in a clear identification of need and created a blueprint for the development of the OEYCFC initial plan.

As a community we are excited to move this plan to implementation; building on the strengths of our current system of supports, we will continue to create a seamless service experience for families and children that is responsive to their needs.



2.0 Developing Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs)

The Ministry has provided CMSMs with a number of key documents to assist with the planning for and implementation of OEYCFCs in their local communities. These documents include:

- Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (2018), Business Practices and Funding Guidelines for Service System Managers
- Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres, Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers
- Ontario’s Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework
- *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*
- Child Care and Early Years Act

These documents outline the key expectations and planning guidelines for the programs and services delivered in OEYCFCs.

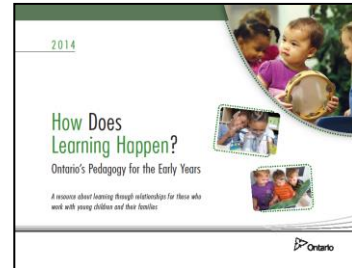
OEYCFCs are one of the key pillars in supporting the realization of Ontario’s vision for the early years. This vision states,

“Ontario’s children and families are well supported by a system of responsive, high quality, accessible and increasingly integrated early years programs and services that contribute to healthy child development today and a stronger future tomorrow.”

To support the achievement of this vision, the following guiding principles will be used for developing, delivering, and evaluating OEYCFC programs and services:

- **Child and Family Centred:** *All programs and services are designed to meet the unique needs of parents, caregivers and young children to support their developmental health and general well-being.*
- **Welcoming:** *OEYCFCs provide a warm and welcoming environment based on the foundational conditions for supporting growth and long term success (belonging, well-being, engagement and expression).*
- **High Quality:** *Programs and services are designed to foster positive outcomes and support nurturing relationships for children, parents and caregivers based on the latest evidence and research.*
- **Inclusive:** *Programs and services are accessible and responsive to children, parents and caregivers with varying abilities and cultural, language, socio-economic, sexual orientation and religious backgrounds.*
- **Integrated:** *Programs and services are developed, coordinated and delivered in a cohesive manner in collaboration with broader community services, school boards, early years partner, primary care providers, parents and caregivers.*
- **Community Led:** *Communities, educators, parents and caregivers are engaged in designing OEYCFC programs and services that embrace and build on their strengths, address identified gaps and meet their unique needs.*

The pedagogical framework detailed in *How Does Learning Happen?* will guide the programs, services and environments created by OEYCFCs, with OEYCFCs viewing the children, parents, caregivers, and educators as competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential and experience. The OEYCFC environment will also view parents and caregivers as co-learners and leaders in influencing positive child, family and community experiences and outcomes.



In accordance with Ministry expectations, OEYCFC programs and services will be designed and delivered to meet the following key goals and objectives:

- Parents and caregivers have access to high quality services that support them in their role as children’s first teachers, enhance their well-being, and enrich their knowledge about early learning and development
- Children have access to play and inquiry-based learning opportunities and experience positive developmental health and well-being
- Parents and caregivers have opportunities to strengthen their relationships with their children
- Francophone children and families have access to French language programs and gain enhanced knowledge about language and identity acquisition
- Indigenous children and families have access to culturally responsive programming
- Parents and caregivers are provided with timely, relevant and up to date information about community and specialized services
- Local service providers collaborate and integrate services to meet community needs in an efficient and accessible way

To achieve the goals and objectives, the Ministry of Education has identified **three mandatory core services** for all OEYCFCs that must be provided at no fee to the participants. These include:

Engaging Parents and Caregivers

- Discussions and information sharing about child development, parenting, nutrition, play and inquiry-based learning, and other topics that support their role
- Pre- and post-natal support programs to enhance parent and caregiver well-being and to support them in their role(s)
- Targeted outreach activities directed at parents and

	caregivers that could benefit from OEYCFC programs and services but are not currently accessing services for a variety of reasons
Supporting Early Learning Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in programs and other programs and services that build responsive adult-child relationships and encourage children’s exploration, play and inquiry, supported by <i>How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years</i>
Making Connections for Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to a parent/caregiver concern about their child’s development through conversation and observation supported by validated tools and resources • Information sharing about and facilitating connections with specialized community services, coordinated service planning, public health, education, child care, and child welfare, as appropriate • Information sharing about programs and services available for the whole family beyond the early years

Role of the County of Oxford as CMSM

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) are responsible and accountable for managing local child care and early years programs and services. Beginning in 2018, municipal service managers will also be responsible for the local management of OEYCFCs. As outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act, service system managers are mandated to:

- Establish, administer, operate and fund early years programs, including providing assistance to operators and evaluating and assessing the impact of public funding
- Deliver and administer local policies respecting the operation of early years programs and services
- Coordinate the planning and operation of early years programs and consult with school boards and other prescribed persons or entities in accordance with legislation
- Assess the economic viability of early years programs and facilitate changes to make programs more viable

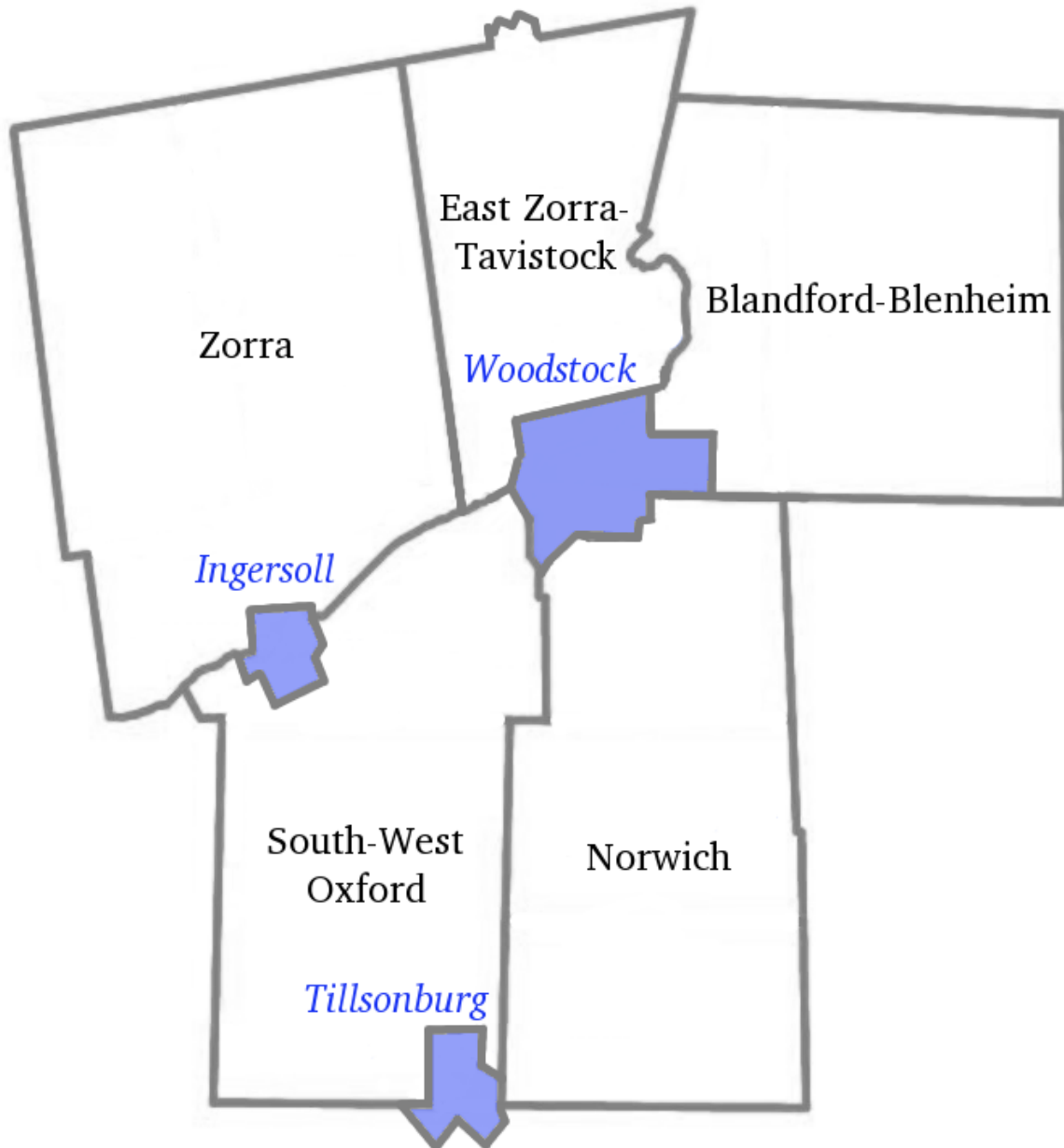
To achieve the intended outcomes for OEYCFCs, CMSMs must:

- Conduct local needs assessments and facilitate meaningful engagement with key community partners, parents, and caregivers to integrate OEYCFCs into local service system plans for early years programs and services
- Enhance, relocate and/or reconfigure OEYCFC programs and services to meet community needs, as required
- Manage provincial funds and any third party contracts associated with the delivery of OEYCFC programs and services
- Manage provincial funds related to early years community planning groups

3.0 Community Profile

Oxford County is located in the heart of Southwestern Ontario. The county is comprised of five townships and three urban municipalities (Woodstock, Ingersoll and Tillsonburg), with Woodstock being the most highly populated urban area. Oxford County is comprised of a mix of rural and smaller urban areas and towns. The large concentration of people in Woodstock has centralized many of the services that are offered across the county here.

See the map below for further details.



Oxford County borders six other Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) catchment areas:

- City of London
- City of St. Thomas
- County of Norfolk
- Region of Waterloo
- City of Stratford
- City of Brantford

The community needs assessment for OEYCFCs has also looked at the opportunity to work collaboratively on joint community needs with other CMSMs.

Oxford County is growing at a slow pace. It experienced a 4.9% increase in its overall population from 2011 to 2016. As of 2016, 110,860 individuals live in Oxford County. Woodstock is the most populated area in the county, with 40,900 individuals. As a municipality, Woodstock is growing at a faster pace than the overall county. It realized an 8.3% increase since 2011. This rate of growth is projected to continue in Woodstock through 2026.

In terms of growth, Ingersoll is also growing at a slightly faster rate than the overall county. From 2011 to 2016 Ingersoll saw a 5.0% increase in its overall population. Blandford-Blenheim experienced the slowest rate of growth with a 0.5% increase in its overall population from 2011 to 2016.

Over the same time period, the child population (0 to 6 years) in Oxford County increased at about the same rate. In 2016, 9,113 children aged 0 to 6 years lived in Oxford County. This is an increase of 5.0% from 2011. This population comprises 8.2% of the overall population.

In terms of its cultural-linguistic context, Oxford County is home to many Indigenous and Low German speaking children and families.

As of 2011, Oxford County is home to 9,810 immigrants (9.3% of the population), with 0.6% of Oxford's total population being recent immigrants (2011). According to the 2016 Statistics Canada census data, 2.7% of the population (3,040 people) speak a non-official language as their language spoken most often at home.

The most common non-official language spoken at home in Oxford County is German, with 800 individuals reporting this as the language they speak most often at home (2016). The second most common non-official language spoken at home is Dutch (465 individuals). Francophones are not prevalent in Oxford County, with only 225 individuals report speaking French most often at home (2016).

Oxford County is home to a number of Indigenous persons. The 2011 Statistics Canada census reports that 1,350 persons of Indigenous identity reside in Oxford County.

17.6% of children under the age of 6 live in low-income families. Many of these children live in Woodstock (620 or 47.9%). Populations at a higher risk of low income include: new immigrants, children and youth, lone parents, single individuals (particularly senior women), persons with work-limiting disabilities, Indigenous persons, visible minorities, and women.

Overall, Oxford County’s scores on the Early Development Instrument (EDI) are lower than the provincial averages. Although Oxford County, as a whole, is lower than the Ontario average of 29.4%, both Norwich and Woodstock have a higher percentage of children vulnerable on one of more domain (EDI, 2015), with 30.0% and 33.8% respectively.

Further and more detailed information about Oxford County is presented in the Needs Assessment section of this report.



4.0 Engagement Process/Strategy

The County of Oxford, as the CMSM, undertook a comprehensive and inclusive engagement process to better understand and articulate the needs of children and families living in its communities. Existing data and research about the communities were utilized, where available, and further data and information were gathered. The groups that were involved in the engagement process include:

- Parents/caregivers
- Children
- Service providers
- Current OEYC provider
- Indigenous service providers and elders
- School boards

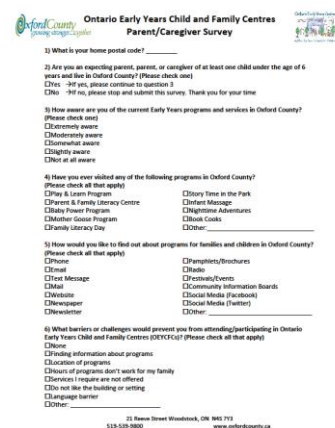
Parent/Caregiver Engagement

As part of the community needs assessment for the OEYFCs, parents/caregivers were approached directly to provide input into the development and design of the new service system. Information was collected from parents/caregivers through a survey that was open from January 1, 2017 to February 14, 2017. The survey was available in the following formats:

- Website-based, online format through SurveyMonkey
- PDF format
- Paper format

In addition, the Data Analysis Coordinator in Oxford County was open to meeting with respondents in person or over the telephone to provide the survey orally, if requested. The majority of the surveys were completed using SurveyMonkey, and there were a few paper copies submitted.

A total of 480 surveys were completed, with 440 respondents identifying as an expecting parent, parent, or caregiver of at least one child under 6 years of age living in Oxford County. The survey used a convenience sample as a sampling technique. A convenience sample, also known as availability sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from respondents who are conveniently available to participate in the survey (Source: Dillman, D., Smyth, J., & Christian, L. (2014). *Internet, Phone, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys: The Tailored Design Method* (4th edition). New Jersey: Wiley). The advertising efforts outlined below assisted in exposing the survey to as many potential parents/caregivers as possible.



The parent/caregiver survey was advertised in a number of ways, including:

- English and French postcards were distributed to all three school boards in Oxford County (i.e. Thames Valley District School Board, London District Catholic School Board, and Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence) and sent home with students from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 3
- The postcards and survey talking points were distributed to all OEYC programs throughout Oxford County, the Garderie Francophone Du Comté D’Oxford (French licensed child care services in Woodstock and surrounding area), and the PFLC at Winchester Street Public School in Woodstock
- Survey announcements were advertised on the local radio station and posted on social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter)


Further parent/caregiver engagement was conducted through the use of focus groups. Three focus groups were held with parents/caregivers. These focus groups were held in Woodstock, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg. A total of 13 parents attended the focus groups. The majority of parents were Ontario Works participants.

In order to continue to refine the plan for OEYCFCs and ensure that they meet all families’ needs, further parent/caregiver engagement is planned for 2018. Focus groups will be conducted with parents of children with special needs.

Engagement of Children


The voice of the child is key to the development of Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres. In order to capture this voice, children completed “Children’s Activity Sheets” telling us what they like to do. These sheets were completed in English and French. In total, 197 activity sheets were completed, 102 in English and 95 in French.

What do you like to do? Tell us with words and pictures!



First Name: _____ Age: _____

A l'aide de dessins et/ou mots, dites-nous ce que tu aimes faire.



Prénom : _____ Âge: _____

Service Provider Engagement

Service providers provided input into the community needs assessment and development of the OEYCFC service delivery model in a number of ways. A full day engagement session was held on April 25, 2017. 37 individuals attended this session, representing a broad spectrum of service providers including:

773 years of experience were represented in the room!



In addition to the above, a service provider online survey was conducted. This survey was advertised through an email that was sent to the Oxford Children's Services Network members, child care organizations, and other support organizations. 73 service providers responded to the survey. There was a diversity of professional respondents, including leadership/management, public health staff, frontline staff, administrative staff, and other Early Years experts in the community. The respondents possessed various years of experience in working with children and families, ranging from less than one year to over 30 years.

Current Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) and Parenting and Family Literacy Centre (PFLC) Service Providers

A number of meetings were held with the current OEYC and PFLC service providers to discuss service system planning and transition plans.

Indigenous Service Providers

While there are no service providers in Oxford County dedicated to serving only the Indigenous community, the Journey Together Oxford Project has established an Indigenous Advisory Committee to lead the development of a plan to increase access to culturally responsive early years services for Indigenous children and families. This Advisory Committee has met two times and includes representatives from the Metis Organization of Ontario, N'Amerind, Women's Secretariat for the Metis Nation of Ontario, and the Elgin-Oxford Legal Clinic.

This work of this group will be used to create a community focused plan in the fall of 2017.

School Board Engagement

The County of Oxford, as the CMSM, understands the important role that schools play in the OEYCFC initiative. With the Schools First policy, local school boards have been a key player in the OEYCFC engagement process. Ongoing discussions have been held with the Thames Valley

District School Board (TVDSB) and the London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) about potential space for OEYCFCs.

In addition to the above discussions, the Early Years Leads from the two school boards participated in the OEYCFC full day engagement session.

Data Collection and Profiles

To supplement the data and information gathered from stakeholder groups, existing data were used to create community profiles. Other sources of data used in the community needs assessment include:

- Statistics Canada
- EDI, EQAO, OSSLT
- School boards (Kindergarten Parent Survey, enrolment projections)
- Municipal data about community/neighbourhood infrastructure

Using the collected data, data profiles were developed for each of the communities in Oxford County. These profiles contain the following data:

- Population/Number of Children
- Population Projections
- Elementary School Enrolment Projections
- Language Spoken Most Often at Home
- Indigenous Identify
- Early Development Indicator (EDI) Results
- Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) Results for Grades 3 and 6, Grade 9 Achievement Results, and Grade 10 OSSLT Achievement Results
- Other Child/Family Risk Factors (% of children living in low income, % of households spending more than 30% of their total income on shelter costs, median household income, number of lone parent families)
- Data from the Kindergarten Parent Survey (TVDSB schools only) re: accessing information about parenting, child participation in programs/activities
- Community Infrastructure

See Appendix A for the community profiles.

5.0 Summary of Community Needs Assessment

The Oxford County community needs assessment utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, supplemented with family, child, and service provider experience. The Statistics Canada data utilized for the community needs assessment is, for the most part, 2011 data. Profiles will be updated once 2016 data are fully released.

Summary of What Families Said

The voice of families, including their needs and experiences, are a critical aspect of developing the OEYCFCs. In order to capture the input provided by families through the engagement process, the four pillars of the early years and child care system have been used.

Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017) is the Province's plan to transform Ontario's early years and child care system. This framework identifies four pillars of the early years and child care system:

Affordability	Access	Quality	Responsiveness
Ensuring that early years programs and services, including licensed child care, are within affordable reach for families	Increasing access to early years programs to give families more opportunity to benefit from high-quality early childhood programs and services	Enabling safe and reliable programs built on positive, responsive relationships, engaging environments, and meaningful experiences for children and families, delivered by educated and well-supported staff	Providing a range of early years and child care programs that are inclusive and culturally appropriate, located in schools, communities, workplaces and home settings so that parents – including parents who work irregular hours – can choose the options that work best for their family

Some of the common themes which emerged over the course of the engagement with families are presented in each of the four pillars below.

Affordability	Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For some parents/caregivers finances are a barrier to accessing programs and services for their children • Low cost/no cost programs are preferred • Physical activities, sports, and dance were named as programs and services that were the most expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/caregivers want program locations to be safe, clean, welcoming, stimulating, and be a play-based learning environment • In terms of staff, parents/caregivers would like staff to be approachable and friendly
Access	Responsiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many parents/caregivers are not aware of the programs and services that are available to them and their children. They need to know where to access information about these programs and services • For some parents/caregivers transportation is a challenge. These families indicated they can only travel to places within walking distance from their home • Most parents/caregivers (74%) are willing to travel a short drive (local and surrounding communities) to attend OEYCFs • Parents/caregivers report that the best locations for the new OEYCFs are community centres, libraries, outdoors, schools, public buildings, churches, and non-profit organizations • Parents/caregivers like to hear about programs and services through email, social media (Facebook page), internet/websites, pamphlets or brochures, and mail • Some parents/caregivers would like to be able to access specialized services at the OEYCFs (i.e. child development screening tools, speech and language tests, public health nurses, early literacy specialists, and dieticians) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/caregivers want programs and services to be provided Monday to Saturday mornings, Monday to Friday evenings, and Saturday and Sunday afternoons • Many parents/caregivers are interested in whole-family programs, where programs offered could include children over 6 years of age • Some parents/caregivers are also interested in outdoor programs, educational/learning programs for their children, physical activity programs, and nutritional programs • Parents/caregivers report that they would like physical activity programs for their younger children (under the age of 3 years) • Programs need to be accessible by people of various abilities, including children with special needs, and must be inclusive (i.e. welcoming to low income parents) • Parents/caregivers feel that it is extremely important to have access to online resources

activities, making frequent use of toys and equipment in their playing and learning at current programs and services.

Looking at the themes across all children some major activities emerge. The top activities that children like to engage in are:

1. Playing Games/Playing with Toys and Equipment (53.4% of children)
2. Arts and other Creative Activities (28.2% of children)
3. Getting Active Indoors and Outdoors (20.4% of children)

Playing Games with Toys and Equipment (53.4%): The most common activity of all children was Playing Games/Playing with Toys and Equipment. Children mentioned playing with balls, slime, cards, the pool, puzzles, trucks, dolls, dollhouses, dinosaurs, Pokémon cards, and playdough.



Arts and other Creative Activities (28.2%): Children love to express themselves creatively. More tactile artistic pursuits like painting, drawing, colouring, building crafts were all frequently mentioned in the responses. Other fine artistic endeavours such as singing and dancing were also common in this group.

Getting Active Indoors and Outdoors (20.4%): Riding bikes, playing on swings and slides, jumping, running, swimming and playing sports were all commonly mentioned in this largely represented theme. Favorite active indoor activities varied widely, but favourite outdoor activities were most commonly soccer, hockey, basketball, swimming. Some like to play on teams and some prefer to participate informally by playing with the sports equipment. Interestingly, jumping in puddles was mentioned several times as a favorite outdoor activity by several different children.



Other activities children enjoy include: playing with friends, sports, being with family, going to places and programs, snack time, and reading.

French Language Results

Simply looking at the words used in the feedback, the most frequently occurring words were: play, soccer, outside, love, cat, cars, mom, dad, dog, game, park, swim, friends. They are a social group who likes spending time outside playing with friends and family.



Looking at the themes across all children some major activities emerge. The top activities that children like to engage in are:

1. Getting Active Indoors and Outdoors (45.3% of children)
2. Playing Games/Playing with Toys and Equipment (38.9% of children)
3. Sports (25.3% of children)

Getting Active Indoors and Outdoors (45.3%): Getting active included everything from playing on the trampoline and swimming, to a variety of sports such as soccer, basketball and hockey. Some children like to play on teams and some prefer to participate informally by playing with the sports equipment. This is the largest theme represented in the group. The group is very active in sports and other more organized physical activities such as gymnastics and swimming.



Playing Games with Toys and Equipment (38.9%): Children mentioned playing with the trampolines, a variety of toy dolls, and superheroes, using the pool, and playing with cars. It is important to point out that the trampoline and pools were mentioned many times and it seems like a favourite activity amongst many children. There were also many mentions of a variety of toys, from trucks to balls.



Sports (25.3%): Sports are an important part of children’s physical and social development. This category was represented most commonly by soccer, with hockey and basketball as the next most common team sports children played.

Other activities children enjoy include: being with family, playing with friends, arts and other creative activities, going to places and programs, reading, and snack time.

Implications for Planning

The programming provided at the OEYFCs needs to reflect what children like to do. Children in Oxford like to be physically active and to play!

What Service Providers Said

According to the service provider survey, overall, service providers are very aware of the current early years programs and services in Oxford County. There were some service providers that responded they were not at all aware of these programs or services. Due to this, advertising and outreach to these service providers and organizations remains an area requiring more attention in the future.

The majority of service providers stated that they have sought or collected information regarding early years programs and services to give to their clients. This is consistent with the majority of service providers reporting that they have referred their clients to these programs in the past.

The top reasons for referring clients to early years programs and service revolve around seeing benefit for the child, parent/caregiver or the family. The top reasons for not referring clients included: client already attended programs, was not relevant to my clients, client declined suggestion, and was not aware of programs.

The service providers expressed that their top methods for finding out about early years programs and services include: email, website, pamphlets or brochures, social media (Facebook), and workshops or seminars.

According to service providers, the greatest areas that need attention for children (0 to 6 years) include:

1. Mental health
2. Social development
3. Language development
4. Nutrition and food
5. Physical activity or exercise
6. Emotional development

In addition, the greatest areas that need attention for parents or caregivers include:

1. Parenting skills training
2. Parenting education
3. Parenting support groups
4. Parenting mental health groups
5. Communication skills training
6. Parent resource library



The service providers responded that the best locations for the new OEYCFCs would be community centres. Other top locations include: non-profit organizations, public buildings, schools, outdoors, libraries, and churches.

Service providers suggested that the new OEYCFCs could support their work by:

- Providing program and referral information to parents/caregivers about their organization
- Providing them with early years information and research
- Provide them with a space to offer services to parents/caregivers and young children

Finally, the best training methods identified by the service providers include: online resources, workshops, webinars, information sessions, in-person training, and seminars.

At the April 2017 engagement session, service providers reviewed the results of the parent and service provider surveys and highlighted data that will help inform the development of the new OEYCFCs. At this session, service providers also discussed the service delivery model for OEYCFCs. This discussion included the identification of contextual information about towns/areas in the county, potential locations for main and satellite sites, areas of focus for targeted outreach, and the use of virtual services/resources and a local phone line. This input has been used to develop the initial plan.

Implications for Planning

Advertising and outreach to service providers and organizations is an area that requires continued attention in the future. Internet-based vehicles are a good way to communicate with service providers (i.e. website, email, social media).

The benefit of OEYCFCs for children, parents/caregivers and families must be clearly articulated to service providers.

Like parents/caregivers, community centres were identified as the preferred location for OEYCFCs. These sites should be explored for potential OEYCFC locations.

Linkages should be made with existing service providers so that information about their programs and services can be provided to families accessing the OEYCFCs, and so that supplementary programs and services can be offered to families at the OEYCFCs.

Our Families and What they Need

A number of indicators were looked at to develop a profile of children and families in Oxford County, and to assist with the assessment of community need.

Family Demographics

Number and Location of Children Aged 0 to 6 Years

- In 2011, there were 8,678 children aged 0 to 6 years in Oxford County, comprising 8.2% of the total population
- In 2016, there were 9,113 children aged 0 to 6 years in Oxford County, comprising 8.2% of the total population
- There was an increase (435 or 5.0%) in the number of 0 to 6 year olds from 2011 to 2016, corresponding with a 4.9% increase in the overall population
- Municipalities which experienced a higher than average growth in the number of children aged 0 to 6 years from 2011 to 2016 include: East-Zorra Tavistock, Norwich, and Woodstock

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Number of Children 0 to 6 (2011)	Number of Children 0 to 6 (2016)	% Change (2011 to 2016)
Blandford-Blenheim	571	572	0.2%
East-Zorra Tavistock	483	534	10.6%
Ingersoll	1,035	1,041	0.6%
Norwich	1,155	1,233	6.8%
South-West Oxford	740	740	0.0%
Tillsonburg	1,042	1,042	0.0%
Woodstock	2,965	3,257	9.8%
Zorra	678	694	2.4%

Implications for Planning

Municipalities with a higher number of children aged 0 to 6 years should have access to child and family programs. All municipalities in Oxford currently have either an OEYC or PFLC located in their community.

Language

- According to 2016 Statistics Canada data, the rural municipalities south of Woodstock have a higher percentage of residents speaking a non-official language most often at home (Norwich, South-West Oxford), with 5.0% or higher of the population speaking a non-official language most often at home
- The top languages spoken most often at home in this area of Oxford County are German (580) and Dutch (340)
- Other top languages spoken at home in other municipalities include: Polish, Spanish and Portuguese (Woodstock), German, Hungarian and Vietnamese (Tillsonburg), German and Dutch (Zorra and East-Zorra Tavistock), and Dutch, Polish and Hungarian (Blandford-Blenheim)

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Total Population (2016)	Number Speaking Non-Official Language Most Often at Home	% of Population Speaking Non-Official Language Most Often at Home
Blandford-Blenheim	7,400	65	0.9%
East-Zorra Tavistock	7,130	70	0.1%
Ingersoll	12,755	120	0.9%
Norwich	11,000	655	6.0%
South-West Oxford	7,660	410	5.4%
Tillsonburg	15,875	390	2.5%
Woodstock	40,900	1,175	2.9%
Zorra	8,140	155	1.9%
TOTAL	110,860	3,040	2.7%

Implications for Planning

OEYCFCs need to reflect the community they serve in terms of culture and language, and create an environment that is welcoming and in which children and families can see themselves.

The south area of Oxford County has a large German and Dutch speaking population. The

OEYCFCs should work with the families and children in this area to ensure the centre reflects their language and cultural needs, including providing information in different languages, and ensuring the provision of culturally responsive programming.

Indigenous Families

- In 2011, 1,350 Indigenous persons lived in Oxford County
- Indigenous persons comprise 1.3% of the total population
- The majority of Indigenous persons live in Woodstock (590), Tillsonburg (305), and Ingersoll (195)

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Total Population (2011)	Number of Indigenous Persons	% of Population
Blandford-Blenheim	7,355	60	0.8%
East-Zorra Tavistock	6,835	35	0.5%
Ingersoll	12,145	195	1.6%
Norwich	10,720	35	0.3%
South-West Oxford	7,545	90	1.2%
Tillsonburg	15,305	305	2.0%
Woodstock	37,755	590	1.6%
Zorra	8,060	30	0.4%
TOTAL	105,720	1,350	1.3%

Implications for Planning

OEYCFC programs and services must be offered that reflect local Indigenous cultures, and that are culturally responsive. Woodstock, Tillsonburg, and Ingersoll have the highest number of Indigenous persons across the county. The OEYCFC service model must reflect this population in its offerings and environment. The Indigenous Advisory Committee will work with the CMSM to ensure the OEYCFC model reflects this.

Francophone Families

In 2016, 225 individuals in Oxford County identified French as the language spoken most often at home. This is 0.2% of the total population

- Every town/township/municipality in Oxford County has some individuals living there who identified French as the language spoken most often at home
- 140 of these individuals (62.2%) live in Woodstock, representing 0.3% of Woodstock's total population

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Total Population (2016)	Number Speaking French as the Language Spoken Most Often at Home	% of Population Speaking French as the Language Spoken Most Often at Home
Blandford-Blenheim	7,400	10	0.1%
East-Zorra Tavistock	7,130	10	0.1%
Ingersoll	12,755	10	0.08%
Norwich	11,000	10	0.09%
South-West Oxford	7,660	15	0.2%
Tillsonburg	15,875	15	0.09%
Woodstock	40,900	140	0.3%
Zorra	8,140	15	0.2%
TOTAL	110,860	225	0.2%

Implications for Planning

There is a very small Francophone population in Oxford County. Based on this, and the fact that parents/caregivers have not requested this service, at this time, French language OEYCFC services may be considered as a satellite service. This will be further explored in 2018.

Potential Risk/Vulnerability Indicators

The risk/vulnerability factors and criteria identified to assist with prioritizing communities for programs and services include:

Factors	Criteria
High rate of children living in low income	% of children <age 6 living in low income (Source: 2011 Census)
High degree of vulnerability on the EDI	% of children vulnerable on one or more domain (Source: 2014-2015 EDI)
High number of lone parent families	Number of lone parent families (Source: 2011 Census)

Number of Children Under the Age of Six Living in Low Income

- In 2011, 1,295 children under the age of 6 (17.6%) live in low-income families
- Many of these children live in Woodstock (620 or 47.9%)
- Other municipalities with a higher percentage of children under the age of 6 living in low income include: Tillsonburg and Norwich

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Percentage of Children <6 Living in Low Income
Blandford-Blenheim	8.2%
East-Zorra Tavistock	11.6%
Ingersoll	10.5%
Norwich	20.0%
South-West Oxford	14.3%
Tillsonburg	21.8%
Woodstock	24.0%
Zorra	3.3%

Early Development Instrument (EDI) Vulnerability

The Early Development Instrument is a population measure of children’s ability to meet age appropriate developmental expectations in five general domains: Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive, and Communication Skills and General Knowledge.

- 28.3% of children in Oxford County are vulnerable on one or more domain (EDI, 2015). This is lower than the provincial average of 29.4%
- Municipalities with a higher than average percentage of children vulnerable on one or more domain include: Woodstock and Norwich

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Percentage of Children Vulnerable on one or more Domain (2015)
Blandford-Blenheim	24.2%
East-Zorra Tavistock	28.8%
Ingersoll	26.4%
Norwich	30.0%
South-West Oxford	14.3%
Tillsonburg	24.9%
Woodstock	33.8%
Zorra	20.2%
Oxford County	28.3%
Ontario	29.4%

Number of Lone Parent Families

- In 2011, there were 4,295 lone parent families living in Oxford County
- Many lone parent families live in Woodstock (1,935 or 45.1%)

- Other municipalities with a high number of lone parent families include: Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, and Norwich

See the table below for further details.

Town/Township/ Municipality	Number of Lone Parent Families (2011)	Percentage of all Lone Parent Families
Blandford-Blenheim	180	4.2%
East-Zorra Tavistock	170	4.0%
Ingersoll	605	14.1%
Norwich	310	7.2%
South-West Oxford	180	4.2%
Tillsonburg	700	16.3%
Woodstock	1,935	45.1%
Zorra	225	5.2%
Oxford County	4,295	100.0%

Implications for Planning

Based on a ranking of the risk and vulnerability factors noted above, municipalities/ townships/towns with a higher level of overall risk and vulnerability are: Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, and Norwich.

At present, either an OEYC or PFLC program is operating in all of these locations.

Demand for Child and Family Programs and Services

Current Child and Family Programs

The current child and family program model in Oxford County is primarily a satellite based model due to the rural nature of the communities served. At present in Oxford County, there are a total of 19 sites providing child and family programs. There are three main OEYC sites in the major towns/cities (Woodstock, Ingersoll and Tillsonburg). There is also a PFLC site in Woodstock. There are 12 satellite OEYC locations and three Mother Goose locations. Every municipality/town/township has at least one site providing child and family programs.

A total of 71,375 hours of direct service per week are being provided to children and families through the current OEYC and PFLC program sites. The PFLC in Woodstock and the OEYC Centre in Woodstock comprise a majority of the direct service hours each week (39.5 hours of 55.3% of the total number of hours).

In 2016, a total of 3,100 unique children were served across the OEYC sites. The site recording the most number of unique children served is the OEYC Centre in Woodstock (953 children).

See the table below for further details.

Municipality/Township/ Town	Program Location	Number of Unique Children Served (2016)	Number of Direct Service Hours per Week
Blandford-Blenheim	OEYC – Satellite (Princeton)	36	1.5
	OEYC – Satellite (Plattsville)	52	1.5
East Zorra-Tavistock	OEYC – Satellite (Innerkip)	47	1.5
	OEYC – Satellite (Tavistock)	99	1.5
Ingersoll	OEYC – Centre (24 Raglan Street, Ingersoll)	231	6.0
	Mother Goose (121 Thames Street North, Ingersoll)	303	1.0
Norwich	OEYC – Satellite (Norwich)	96	1.5
	OEYC – Satellite (Otterville)	54	1.5
South-West Oxford	OEYC – Satellite (Brownsville)	39	1.5
	OEYC – Satellite (Salford)	22	0.75
Tillsonburg	OEYC – Centre (96 Tillson Avenue, Tillsonburg)	227	6.375
	OEYC – Satellite (101 Bidwell Street, Tillsonburg)	135	1.5
	Mother Goose (60 Harvey Street, Tillsonburg)	232	1.0
Woodstock	OEYC – Centre (21 Market Street East, Woodstock)	953	19.5
	Mother Goose (59 Ridell Street, Woodstock)	383	1.0
	PFLC (Winchester Street PS)	Not available	20.0
Zorra	OEYC – Satellite (Embro)	32	1.5
	OEYC – Satellite (Thamesford)	134	1.5
	OEYC – Satellite (Kintore)	25	0.75
TOTAL		3,100+	71.375

All of the OEYC sites across Oxford County are managed by Oxford Community Child Care. The current Early Literacy Specialist (ELS) position is also currently housed at Oxford Community Child Care. At present, Oxford Community Child Care has purchase of service agreements with two other organizations (Community Living Tillsonburg and Oxford-Elgin Child & Youth Centre) to provide OEYC programs and services at certain locations in Oxford. The following table outlines where each of these agencies is operating a current OEYC program.

Organization	OEYC Program Operated
Community Living Tillsonburg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OEYC - Satellite (Brownsville) • OEYC – Satellite (Norwich) • OEYC – Satellite (Otterville) • OEYC – Centre (96 Tillson Avenue, Tillsonburg) • OEYC – Satellite (101 Bidwell Street, Tillsonburg)
Oxford-Elgin Child & Youth Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mother Goose (121 Thames Street North, Ingersoll) • Mother Goose (60 Harvey Street, Tillsonburg) • Mother Goose (59 Ridell Street, Woodstock)

There is also one Parenting and Family Literacy Centre (PFLC) located in Oxford County (in Woodstock at the Winchester Street PS). This site is currently managed and operated by the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB).

Implications for Planning

The current suite of child and family programs will need to be reviewed vis-à-vis the analysis for potential locations of OEYCFCs. There is a strong foundation to build on in terms of infrastructure and direct hours of service, and these must be reviewed to ensure they meet identified community need.

Information about Parenting

The Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) conducts a Kindergarten Parent Survey. The fall 2014 results for Oxford County schools about accessing information about parenting are provided below.

- A minimum of 60% of parents of Kindergarten students in all municipalities/townships/towns have accessed information about parenting to help them in their role as a parent
- The ways parents have accessed or are interested in accessing information about parenting include: internet, reading books, face to face discussion with a trusted professional, and meeting with people who have children the same age as their child(ren)
- The majority of parents are not interested in accessing information about parenting in the following ways: using a telephone hotline, attending a workshop/event, and being part of a small group learning with other parents

Child Participation in Programs Prior to Kindergarten

The TVDSB Kindergarten Parent Survey also captures information about child participation in programs six months before Kindergarten. The fall 2014 results on this topic for Oxford County schools are presented below.

- Programs/activities with more frequent use by children include: physical activity and recreation programs, and organized team sports
- Many parents have never used play-based children’s programs (36% to 49%), literacy/family reading programs (58% to 84%), ESL programs (93%+), children’s clubs (76% to 99%), arts programs (66% to 71%), faith-related programs for children (68% to 79%), cultural/ language/ethnic programs (93%+), and programs at a public library (45% to 66%)

Implications for Planning

Many parents are or have accessed information to help them in their role as a parent. They are not interested in accessing information via telephone hotlines and/or attending workshops/events or small groups with other parents.

Resources for parents should be provided via the internet, by providing links/referrals to books, and providing opportunities for face to face discussions with a trusted professional, and people who have children the same age as their child(ren).

Physical activity and recreation, and organized team sports are the type of programming many parents are currently accessing for their pre-Kindergarten child. Due to lower utilization of many of the other available child and family programs, focus may need to be placed on raising awareness about the availability and value of the current array of programs.

Existing Community Infrastructure

In order to better understand the current community infrastructure in Oxford County, an inventory of existing community resources was created. The resources included in the inventory are: schools, licensed child care centres, libraries, community centres/arenas, OEYCs/PFLCs, and private schools (see Appendix A: Oxford County Community Profiles for further information). Of note:

- All municipalities/townships/towns have some community resources, with the number ranging from a low of 10 to a high of 34
- Woodstock, as the most populated area in Oxford County, has the highest number of community resources (34)
- Blandford-Blenheim and East-Zorra Tavistock have the fewest community resources, with 10 each

Implications for Planning

The number of existing resources should be analyzed vis-à-vis the number of children and level of risk/vulnerability in the community to determine if locations for programming should be added.

Schools with Available/Potential Space

The County of Oxford, as the CMSM, works collaboratively with the school boards in its area (TVDSB, LDCSB, CSCP) to identify sites for OEYCFCs within priority communities/ neighbourhoods. This is an ongoing communication.

None of the current OEYCFCs are located in schools. The PFLC in Woodstock is located in a school (Winchester Street PS).

Other schools with potential available space identified by the school boards include:

LDCSB	TVDSB	Conseil Scolaire Catholique Providence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> St. Joseph's (Tillsonburg) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harrisfield Public School (Ingersoll) Springbank Public School (Woodstock) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None

Implications for Planning

The CMSM has strong working relationships with the local school boards. The County of Oxford will continue to have ongoing discussions with each of the boards about potential school sites for priority OEYCFC locations.

Potential Locations for OEYCFCs

In order to prioritize communities for potential OEYCFC locations, a number of factors, criteria, and weights were identified. A list of factors were developed for “universal” OEYCFC locations (areas with a high number of children), and a separate list of factors were identified for more “intentional” locations of OEYCFCs (those with the potential for higher risk/vulnerability). The factors, criteria, and weights used in this analysis are outlined below.

Universal Factors

Factors	Criteria	Weight	
High child population	Number of children 0 to 4 years (Source: 2011 Census)	100	70
	Number of children 5 to 12 years (Source: 2011 Census)		30

Intentional Factors

Factors	Criteria	Weight
High rate of children living in low income	% of children <age 6 living in low income (Source: 2011 Census)	33.3
High degree of vulnerability on EDI	% of children vulnerable on one or more domain (Source: 2014-2015 EDI)	33.3
High number of lone parent families	Number of lone parent families (Source: 2011 Census)	33.3

Results of Rankings

Based on the above factors, criteria, and weights, Oxford County communities were prioritized in the following way.

Potential Universal OEYCFC Sites		Potential Intentional OEYCFC Sites	
1.	Woodstock	1.	Woodstock
2.	Ingersoll	1.	Tillsonburg
3.	South-West Oxford	3.	Ingersoll
4.	Tillsonburg	4.	Norwich
5.	Blandford-Blenheim	5.	East-Zorra Tavistock
6.	Zorra	6.	South-West Oxford
7.	East-Zorra Tavistock	6.	Blandford-Blenheim
8.	Norwich	7.	Zorra

Implications for Planning

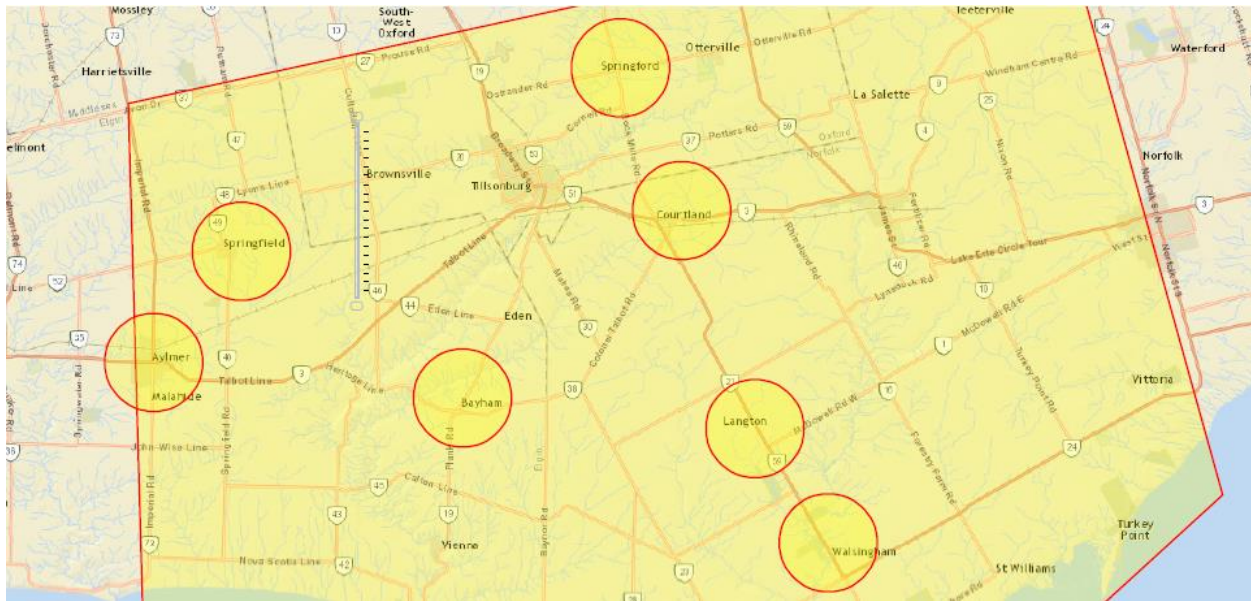
Based on the rankings of the Oxford County communities and the number of hours of direct service per week, some communities should be given strong consideration for the offering of *additional* hours of service through OEYCFC programs and services. These communities include: South-West Oxford, Ingersoll, and Norwich

Groups identified for Targeted Outreach

In addition to the potential locations for universal and intentional OEYCFC sites, service providers in Oxford County reviewed demographic data and discussed what groups could benefit from a targeted outreach approach. As per the July 2016 *Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers*, a component of the mandatory core service, Engaging Parents and Caregivers, is to provide “Targeted outreach activities directed at parents and caregivers that could benefit from OEYCFC programs and services but are not currently accessing services for a variety of reasons.”

One of the identified groups for targeted outreach is the Low German speaking population in the southern part of the county. This group is comprised mainly of Mennonite families from Mexico and many are not currently accessing available programs and services. Through collaborative discussions with some its adjoining CMSMs, the County of Oxford was able to identify that this group of families and children is also a focus for the City of St. Thomas and Norfolk County. A Tri-County initiative was borne out of these discussions. This Tri-County group has met three times to discuss this joint initiative.

The area of focus for the targeted outreach is a triangular area which encompasses the east side of Elgin County (east of Aylmer), the west side of Norfolk County, and the south side of Oxford County (see the map below).



There is limited documented information about this group of families and children, so much of the information collected to date is anecdotal in nature, and is based on service provider experiences with this population. A report written in 1993, *“A Profile of the Mennonite Community in Elgin County,”* notes that this group could benefit from parenting programs that include components of normal growth and development.

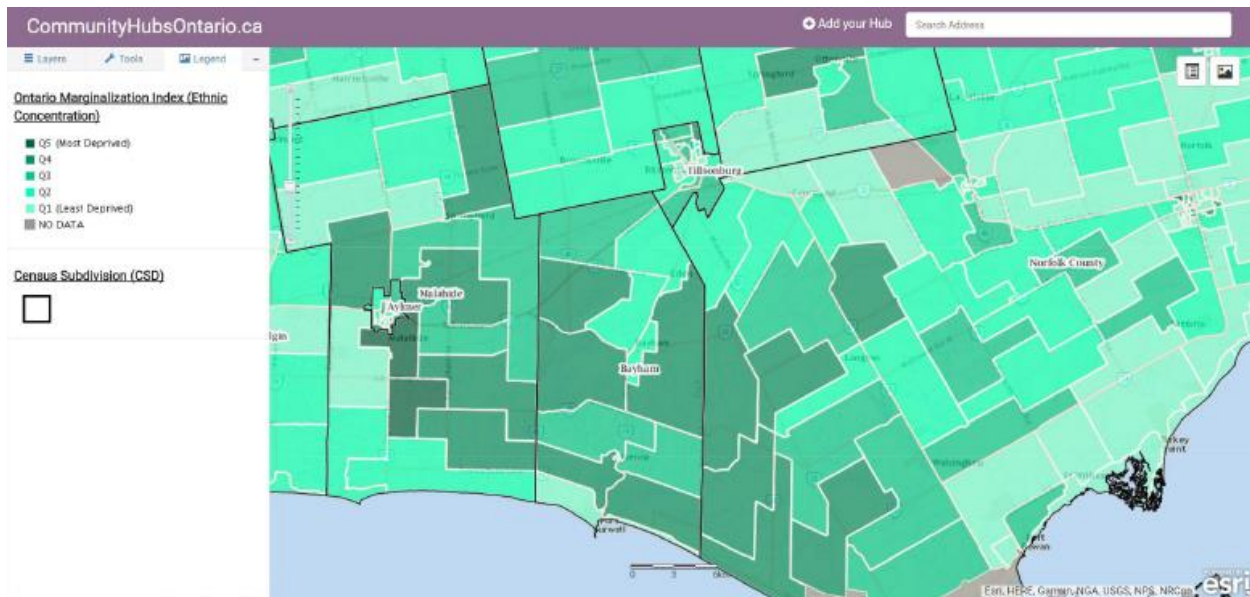
In addition to the Statistics Canada data about language spoken most often at home shared in the Needs Assessment section of this report, data from the Family Education and Support Project of Aylmer (FESPA) operated through Mennonite Community Services, and the Norfolk Community Help Centre has assisted with identifying this population.

In 2016-2017, FESPA served 57 mothers. The majority of these mothers live in Elgin County, with 1% living in Oxford County. The average age of these mothers is 38 and they have an average of four children each. The majority were born in Mexico and have six to eight years of education.

In 2016-2017, the Norfolk Community Help Centre served 30 children in its Mom and Tots program in Frogmore. 26 of these children live in Norfolk County, two in Oxford County, and two in Elgin County. The majority of the mothers attending the program attended school until they were 12 years of age. Family income is typically less than \$50,000 per year.

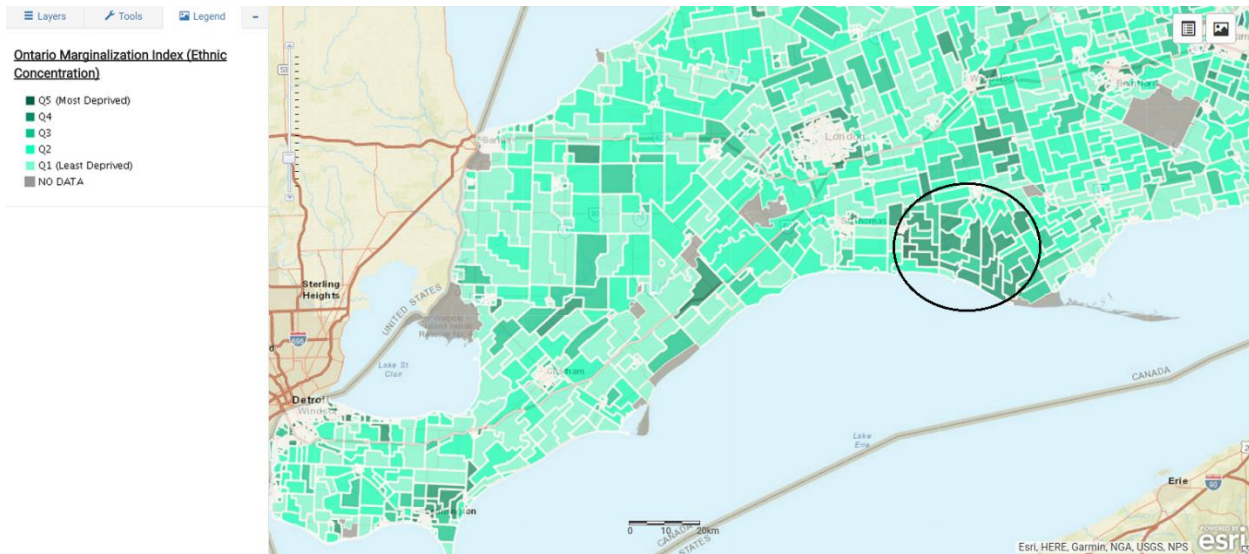
The **Ontario Marginalization (ON-Marg) index** allows the exploration of how factors like residential instability and material deprivation are concentrated at the local level and how this is affecting health outcomes. ON-Marg was created by researchers at the Centre for Urban Health Solutions at St. Michael's (C-UHS).¹ ON-Marg uses census data from 2001 and 2006 to illustrate levels of marginalization across Ontario. ON-Marg focuses on four dimensions that contribute to the process of marginalization: residential instability, material deprivation, dependency, and ethnic concentration.

When census variables related to the process of marginalization were analyzed through factor analysis, two came out as particularly relevant to area-level marginalization: proportion of recent immigrants, and proportion of people identifying as visible minorities. We called these two variables together 'ethnic concentration.' See ON-Marg Index (Ethnic Concentration) map below for the same triangular area as noted in the previous map, as reported using the *Community Hubs Ontario GIS Mapping tool*.



¹ EC Matheson et al. "Development of the Canadian Marginalization Index: a new tool for the study of inequality." *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 2012; 103(Suppl. 2):S12-S16.

Across southwestern Ontario (see map below), the ON-Marg Index for Ethnic Concentration reveals a rather unique situation for the rural Tri-County area.



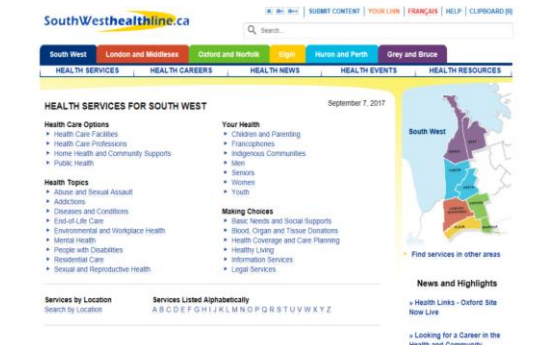
Implications for Planning

The Low German speaking population in Oxford, Norfolk and Elgin Counties is a cultural community that the three CMSMs would like to engage with and learn more about. Given the high Ethnic Concentration On-Marg Index, complemented with the Language Spoken Most Often At Home descriptive statistics and the reported low engagement with current service providers, this population has been identified for targeted outreach as part of the initial plan of all three CMSMs.

Online Resources and Local Phone Lines

There are a number of existing online resources and local phone lines which can be accessed by parents/caregivers. These include:

- Thehealthline.ca (<http://www.thehealthline.ca/>)
- 211



Implications for Planning

The current online resources and local phone lines should continue to be leveraged for use in the OEYCFC model.

Further emphasis needs to be placed on providing access to internet-based resources for families. As noted in the parent survey, parents/caregivers are interested in accessing information via email, social media (Facebook page), and internet/websites



6.0 Initial Plan

The plan for OEYCFCs in Oxford County has been designed based on the results of the community needs assessment. The data collected about the communities in our geographic area, along with the voices and experiences of parents/caregivers, children, and service providers have resulted in a clear road map for OEYCFCs. This initial plan for OEYCFCs is just that – initial. The results of the community needs assessment have provided the information needed to create a strong foundational base for these centres informed by evidence. This work will continue to evolve through ongoing engagement with key stakeholders and the review of updated community and demographic data.



System Management

Planning

As the CMSM, the County of Oxford is mandated to manage the early years, as designated through the *Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)*. The County recognizes the value of community partners' contribution to an integrated community plan for families and children and will use the Oxford Children's Services Network as a planning advisory for OEYCFCs.

Contracts and Funding

The County of Oxford will work to establish a common contract template for service providers of OEYCFCs. The contracts will include a core contract to which schedules can be added to accommodate specific functions. At a minimum, the schedules will include the types of sites, services, and supports to be provided.

System Management and Support

The allocation for Data Analysis Services became the responsibility of the CMSM beginning in 2017. This position plays a key role in supporting the planning efforts for OEYCFCs and to enable the broader collection and mobilization of quantitative and qualitative data to inform ongoing early years community planning processes. The intended outcomes for data analysis services are:

- Ensuring early years service system planning decisions are responsive to regularly reviewed community needs and priorities
- Ensuring that local early years programs and services are reflective of relevant, current research and evidence
- Actively supporting knowledge mobilization and exchange within the early years sector to support service enhancements

Data Analysis Services are being provided by the Oxford Community Child Care through a dedicated staff person.

The allocation for Early Literacy Services becomes the responsibility of the CMSM on January 1, 2018. This function will be included in the functions provided by the OEYCFCs.

OEYCFC Service Model

In order to provide universal access to OEYCFC programs and services, and to be responsive to the families and children with higher levels of risk and vulnerability, the Oxford County OEYCFC service model is based on the analysis of two types of OEYCFC sites – universal sites and intentional sites. This model allows for universal access to programs and services in highly populated areas, and ensures that those with higher than average levels of risk and vulnerability in less populated areas also have access to needed programs and services. The analysis of factors and resulting ranking of communities in Oxford County will ensure that OEYCFC sites are located in a mix of universal and intentional locations.

Based on the results of the community needs assessment, and in order to address the varying needs across Oxford County, OEYCFC services will be delivered in multiple ways, including:

Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres



Service Delivery Mechanism	Brief Description
Main Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated physical space for the OEYCFC • OEYCFC services offered on a more <i>full-time</i> basis • Mandatory core services offered • Located in schools, libraries, standalone spaces, and other “natural” gathering spots
Satellite Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up/take down space for the OEYCFC or dedicated physical space for the OEYCFC • OEYCFC services offered on a <i>part-time</i> basis

Service Delivery Mechanism	Brief Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in programs offered, as a minimum level of service • Located in libraries, schools, standalone spaces and other “natural” gathering spots
Pop Up Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situated in non-traditional spaces, like parks or for events/activities • Based on identified community need
Targeted Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situated in towns/communities to build trust and relationships • Based on a community development approach • May include the gathering of further information about need
Online Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of online resources, information, or other virtual services related to the suite of core OEYCFC programs and services • Vehicles to include website and social media • The current website, Thehealthline.ca (http://www.thehealthline.ca/), will be promoted through the OEYCFCs • In addition to this, the OEYCFC service provider(s) will be responsible for planning an online/virtual strategy for parents/ caregivers and will submit a business plan identifying how this function will be delivered beginning in 2019.
Local Phone Lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about OEYCFC programs and services that can be embedded in existing community phone-based information services • Current phone lines, such as 211, will be promoted through the OEYCFCs to ensure that parents with little internet access have an option to find information about programs and services for their child

As part of the implementation strategy the lead service provider will work with each community to ensure the appropriate location of the OEYCFC. This includes continuing to engage with local school boards, and working collaboratively to identify school-based locations for OEYCFCs.

As part of the OEYCFC service model all of the mandatory core services will be provided at the main OEYCFC sites, and one location will be open five days per week, including a Saturday or Sunday, and at least one evening per week. OEYCFC locations will collaborate to ensure alignment of hours of service to maximize number of days and time of day that programs and services are available. Centre-based core services will operate on a year round basis. Services will be offered across the geographic area as a whole. Qualified teams and Registered Early Childhood Educator staff requirements will be adhered to, as prescribed by the Ministry of Education.

Services and Functions to be Provided by the OEYCFC

The three mandatory core services will be provided through the OEYCFCs.

1. *Engaging Parents and Caregivers*

- Discussion and information sharing about child development, parenting, nutrition, play and inquiry-based learning, and other topics that support their role

The community needs assessment identified parents are interested in parenting programs, support groups, nutrition and cooking, literacy, and mental health.

- Pre- and post-natal support programs to enhance parent and caregiver well-being and to support them in their role(s)

The community needs assessment identified that parents of young children are interested in pre-natal programs and breastfeeding programs.

- Targeted outreach activities directed at parents and caregivers that could benefit from OEYCFC programs and service but are not currently accessing services for a variety of reasons

The community needs assessment identified the Low German speaking population in south Oxford as a group that is currently not accessing child and family programs.

2. *Supporting Early Learning and Development*

- Drop-in programs and other programs and services that build responsive adult-child relationships and encourage children's exploration, play and inquiry, supported by *How Does Learning Happen?*

The community needs assessment identified that parents of children are interested in attending family learning programs and literacy programs.

Play-based learning will be the primary vehicle in OEYCFCs that supports relationships with parents and facilitates opportunities for discussion and learning. Early years activities within the OEYCFCs will be based on the four foundations of Well-being, Belonging, Expression, and Engagement. These programs will be led by qualified facilitators RECEs, where appropriate.

Drop-in programs will be provided in every OEYCFC location, whether it be a main site or satellite site.

Capacity building around inclusion will be provided to all OEYCFC sites/staff. This will ensure that all OEYCFCs are welcoming and accessible to children of varying abilities.

Early literacy, as a function, will also be incorporated into OEYCFC programming.

3. *Making Connections for Families*

- Responding to a parent/caregiver concern about their child’s development through conversation and observation supported by validated tools and resources
- Information sharing about and facilitating connections with specialized community services, coordinated service planning, public health, education, child care, and child welfare, as appropriate
- Information sharing about programs and services available for the whole family beyond the early years

The community needs assessment identified that, overall, there is a lack of awareness by parents of available programs and services for their child(ren). In addition, a number of parents made comments about requiring services and supports for children with special needs.

The OEYCFCs will align and coordinate their work with the key services identified in Ontario’s Special Needs Strategy. Future capacity building will also be a focus for OEYCFC staff on provincially developed screening tools when ready, and referral and intake related to specialized services.

To better understand the needs of children with special needs as they relate to participating in OEYCFCs, a focus group will be held with parents of these children.

Service coordination is a key component of the OEYCFC model. The design of the model will ensure that:

- Parents and caregivers are provided with timely, relevant and up to date information about community and specialized services
- Local service providers collaborate and integrate services to meet community needs in an efficient and accessible way
- Early years programs and services coordinate with other community and human services
- Coordination with Parks and Recreation and libraries for programming

In addition to providing direct service for children aged 0 to 6 years, OEYCFCs will facilitate collaboration amongst service providers and coordinate the provision of services in OEYCFC space for children beyond the age of six that align with the needs and priorities of the community.

Locations of OEYCFCs

Based on the results of the community needs assessment main site and satellite locations are proposed Oxford County's OEYCFC model. Due to the rural composition of Oxford, there are some communities that could benefit from OEYCFC programs and services but do not have the numbers needed to support a main site. In these instances, a satellite site will be identified, which will operate on a part-time basis and offer, at a minimum, drop-in programs.

The new OEYCFC service provider(s) will submit a plan for hours of service at each of the OEYCFC locations as part of its annual business plan submission to the CMSM. In addition to an annual business plan, the OEYCFC service provider(s) will be required to submit a year end service report, and required statistical/data reports.



As part of the business plan, all OEYCFC site locations will be identified by the OEYCFC service provider for approval by the CMSM, and will be based on available resources, and ability to meet community need.

At a minimum, OEYCFC main sites will be located in the following communities:

- Woodstock
- Tillsonburg
- Ingersoll

There will also be a minimum of one OEYCFC satellite site in every Township in Oxford County, including Woodstock, Tillsonburg, and Ingersoll.

Indigenous Programs and Services

In order to support the delivery of culturally responsive early years programs and services, an Indigenous Learning Facilitator will work with all OEYCFC sites and staff to build the capacity of programs to reflect local Indigenous cultures. This facilitator position will be further documented in the Journey Together plan.

French Language Programs and Services

The community needs assessment identified a very small number of Francophone individuals in Oxford County. Due to this and the lack of input requesting services, at this time, specific French language programs and services will not be offered at the OEYCFCs. This need will be assessed on an ongoing basis.

Targeted Outreach

As identified through the community needs assessment, the Low German speaking population in south Oxford will be the focus of a targeted outreach strategy. This is a tri-county initiative being undertaken with the City of St. Thomas and the County of Norfolk. The targeted outreach approach for 2018 includes:

1. Initiate a community development approach to build trust and relationship within the communities of Low German speaking families, and to make connections to current community services/resources
2. Develop overall system capacity to support current programs that provide services to the Low German speaking population (FESPA, Norfolk Community Help Centre)
3. Build service capacity to provide child and family programs to the Low German speaking population living in Oxford County (i.e. transportation to current services, provision of mobile/outreach services)
4. Build an evaluation framework for the initiative, and conduct a year one, formative evaluation
5. Share learnings with the broader system of service providers

OEYCFC Service Provider

At present there are two providers of child and family programs in Oxford County. Oxford Community Child Care (OCCC) has been providing OEYC programs and services since 2012. OCCC is a full service, not-for-profit, charitable agency offering child care, licensed home child care, school age programs, pre-school and the OEYC program. The Thames Valley District School Board has been operating the PFLC at Winchester Street PS since its inception.

The Thames Valley District School Board has stated its intention to withdraw from the provision of child and family programs as of December 31, 2017.

OCCC will be maintained as the lead agency for OEYCFCs in order to leverage existing expertise and capacity in the community.

Transition Plan

The work to implement OEYCFCs in Oxford County will not happen overnight. Over the course of 2018, the CMSM will lead the transition to the vision captured in this initial plan. The County of Oxford will work with Oxford Community Child Care to develop a transition plan so that there is minimal disruption to the service system, families, and children. This will include the development of a year one business plan for the OEYCFC system of services.

The transition phase to move current OEYCs and PFLCs to the new Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centre model will cover the time period of January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018. During this time, existing service levels, service locations, and programs will be maintained. The County of Oxford will enter into a one year purchase of service agreement with Oxford Community Child Care for this purpose.

During the first six months of this transition phase (January to June 2018), it is our hope that Oxford Community Child Care will operate the current PFLC program at Winchester Street PS in Woodstock. The need to continue to provide service at this location will be determined during this time period.

Over the course of 2018 the CMSM, in collaboration, with Oxford Community Child Care will:

- Have continued consultations with families
- Build partnerships for potential new locations
- Review the current OEYC programs for alignment with *How Does Learning Happen?*
- Develop a Business Plan (by August 31, 2018) for the new OEYCFC model. This Business Plan will include OEYCFC locations, hours, services to be provided, service provider information, etc.

As of January 1, 2019, a phased implementation of the new OEYCFC model will begin. This will include the implementation of new and enhanced services (i.e. new locations, pop up services, targeted outreach, virtual resources, etc.), evaluation of the new model, and minor adjustments, as required.

As of January 1, 2020, the new OEYCFC model will be fully operational.

Communication Strategy

As 2018 is a transition year in which programs and services will remain “as is”, a comprehensive communication strategy will be developed in the early part of 2018 to coincide with the implementation of the new model. Key audiences for the communication strategy are parents/caregivers, staff, and service providers.

Oxford’s communication strategy will respect the Ministry of Education’s requirements, and align with the Ministry’s overall communication strategy. The local communication strategy will leverage and build on the Ministry’s key communication messages.

7.0 Moving Forward!

The County of Oxford is excited to begin the process of implementing OEYCFCs in our communities. The transformation of existing Ministry-funded child and family programs into an increasingly integrated, cohesive system of services and supports for children ages 0 to 6 and their parents/caregivers means that families and children are going to have easier access to quality programs and services that are more affordable and responsive to their needs.

The new OEYCFCs align with Oxford County's 2015 to 2018 Strategic Plan, in particular the following objectives:

1. A County that Works Together
 - ii) Enhance the quality of life for all of our citizens

3. A County that Thinks ahead and Wisely Shapes its Future
 - ii) Implement development policies, land uses and community planning guidelines

4. A County that Informs and Engages
 - i) Harness the power of the community through conversation and dialogue
 - ii) Inform the public about County programs, services and activities through planned communication

5. A County that Performs and Delivers Results
 - i) Enhance our customer service focus and responsiveness to our municipal partners and the public

All of the above will ensure that we are “growing stronger together”.