

In **Phase two**, clusters of services will provide access to a broader range of options for families. These clusters will reflect the unique needs of their neighbourhood or community and may provide links to other services, such as:

- nutrition programs
- public health
- mental health services
- parks and recreation
- speech and language resources
- early identification
- primary health care
- supports for children with special needs
- public libraries
- and more.

Phase two



Toronto's Best Start network is responsible for planning and bringing about these changes, to make the vision a reality for families across Toronto. Network members include representatives from governments, school boards and community organizations across Toronto who make decisions that affect Toronto's children. Partners will use their expertise to ensure families have the supports they need, to give every child has the best start possible.

Parents, service providers and the broader community will have a variety of opportunities to provide input and advice as Best Start moves forward in Toronto.

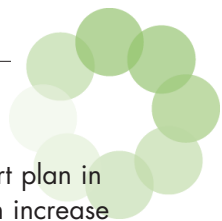
Need more information?

To learn more about Toronto's Best Start program, go to our website at:
www.toronto.ca/children/bs_network.htm



Introducing
BEST START
 in Toronto





What is Best Start?

The provincial Best Start strategy, first announced in November 2004, is a 10-year plan designed to give Ontario's children the best start in life. It will help them achieve success in school by providing a comprehensive system of services that supports children aged 0 – 6 years and their families. It is a plan to strengthen:

- early learning and child care services
- healthy development during a child's first years.

Toronto's Best Start strategy follows this provincial direction. It is designed to meet the early learning and care needs of the city's young children by bringing the existing patchwork together into a system that works for Toronto's families.

Why Best Start?

The assortment of child care, family support programs, schools and other services for families and children are often difficult for families to navigate. Many families have to go to a variety of locations to get information and to gain access to programs for children of different ages. The long-term Best Start strategy will help provide services that are conveniently located and easier for families to use.

How will Toronto's Best Start strategy work?

- **High-quality early learning and care environments:** combining learning expectations, activities and routines from existing kindergarten, child care and family support programs
- **Early years staff teams:** including teachers, early childhood educators, family support practitioners and teaching assistants, working together toward common goals
- **Governance:** supporting community/neighbourhood planning, service integration and local decision-making
- **Partnership agreements:** identifying roles and how partners make decisions.
- **Inclusive access:** creatively designing programs to meet the needs of all children and families
- **Parent participation:** involving parents in their children's early learning and development, by taking part in programs, planning and decision-making
- **Continuum of supports:** responding to the changing needs of all families and children, making efficient use of resources.



Toronto will implement its Best Start plan in two phases. **Phase one** will see an increase in collaboration between programs serving kindergarten-aged children (schools, child care and family support programs). Programs may be located in the same building or close by in the neighbourhood. Each cluster of programs will operate a little differently based on what is already available.

The goal of **Phase one** is to ensure the following services will be available:

- kindergarten: half-day program (or full-day in Francophone school boards)
- child care: full-time, part-time and flexible hours wherever possible
- family support programs: morning and/or afternoon programs, and some weekend hours. This will be offered by Ontario Early Years Centres, family resource programs, or Parenting and Family Literacy Centres.

Phase one

