



## **Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant**

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Second Annual Report from the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant (PPTC) 2005-2006

May 16, 2006

### **Background**

The Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant is a contract position funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The Consultant is part of an interdisciplinary approach to address issues in physical, occupational, and speech therapy services for children in British Columbia, particularly recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists. Improved ability to recruit and retain paediatric therapists across this province will result in better access to therapy services that support children with special needs to achieve their full potential and ability to participate in all aspects of community life. The Consultant works under the direction of the Steering Committee for the BC Provincial Consultant for Paediatric Therapists, comprised of representatives from Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech-Language Pathology and the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

### **Work Plan Objectives and Accomplishments**

To guide the work of the Consultant, the Steering Committee created the following vision: *BC will be the province of choice for paediatric therapists.* The Objectives developed in June 2005 for the work plan for 2005-2006 included:

**Provide a meaningful voice for paediatric therapists across British Columbia to inform decision-making processes that affect child, family, and community outcomes.**

#### Activities & Achievements

- Connections within the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Children and Youth with Special Needs, and Early Childhood Development branches
- Contact with staff within Ministry of Health, Health Human Resources; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Advanced Education
- Collaborative practice with the Provincial Advisors for Infant Development, Aboriginal Infant Development, Supported Child Development, and Children First
  - Provincial Advisor Teleconferences
  - Joint presentations to MCFD, and Nursing Support Services Conference
  - Participation on Provincial Steering Committees for IDP and SCD

- Participation in the Partnerships Project Proposal
- Communication with Paediatric Therapy Councils
  - Participation on teleconferences of each of the OT Council, PT Council and SLP Councils
  - Therapy Council representation on PPTC Steering Committee monthly teleconferences
- Communication with Department Heads, Clinical Fieldwork Co-ordinators, Professors at UBC School of Rehabilitation Sciences, and School of Audiology and Speech Sciences
- Attendance at Integrating Child, Youth, and Family Services Forum (November 2005, Terrace)
- Attended Partnerships Project Forum (November 2005, Vancouver)
- Communication with Professional Associations and Regulatory Colleges re: work plan
  - Representation from all groups on Advisory Network
  - Provided input into PABC Public Practice Survey for Paediatrics
  - Invitation from PABC to speak to UBC MPT students

**Develop collaborative partnerships to encourage implementation of proactive and equitable human resource practices, and creation of positive work environments, in order to foster retention of paediatric therapists.**

Activities and Achievements

- Presentation at BC Association of Child Development and Intervention (BCACDI) meeting, May 2005
- Revision of Recruitment and Retention Guidelines, July 2005
- Employer representation on BC Advisory Network for Paediatric Therapists
- Letter of support written for opportunity to address wage inequities during bargaining process (March 2006)
- Communication with therapists regarding work environments

**Promote Manageable Workloads for paediatric therapists by developing guidelines for caseloads and waitlists, including determination and implementation of consistent language and definitions.**

Activities and Achievements

- Request for Proposal issued July 2005
- Sub-contract awarded; project work initiated September 2, 2005
  - Phase 1: Literature Review completed November 30, 2005

- Phase 2: Provincial Consultation completed Feb 28, 2006
- Phase 3: Proposed Standard Terminology completed March 31, 2006
- Phase 4: Proposed Guidelines for Manageable Workloads completed April 30, 2006

**Develop effective communication and networking opportunities throughout British Columbia for paediatric therapists.**

Activities and Achievements

- Website for posting vacancies & job seeker information
  - Launched [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) (March 31, 2005)
  - Plan prepared for site maintenance and support for users
  - Plan prepared for site enhancement
  - Database redesign to enhance ability to report on vacancy information
  - New features added to the site to improve usability
  - Logo design
  
- Regular Updates to Therapy Councils via teleconference participation
- Semi-Annual update for therapists (September 2005)
- Correspondence with therapists via email and telephone (Toll-free number established)
  
- Established a BC Paediatric Therapy Advisory Network
  - Invitations September-October 2005
  - Draft Terms of Reference developed
  - First teleconference November 15, 2005
  - Advisory Group Teleconferences February 7-15, 2006

**Explore a provincial mentoring strategy to support new therapists by utilizing professional expertise within this province.**

Activities and Achievements

- Developed and submitted a proposal to Children and Youth with Special Needs Branch of Ministry of Children and Family Development for a provincial Mentoring Program

**Promote recruitment initiatives within physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology disciplines.**

Activities and Achievements

- Launch and development of [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website
  
- Targeted Recruitment Strategies Project
  - Call for Interest for Regional OT, PT, SLP Teams to review TRS (October 2005)
  - Teams selected in North, Interior, Fraser and Provincial Health Services Authority regions (November 2005)
  - Regional Reports completed January 26, 2006
  - Compilation into Provincial Perspective April 2006

- Information pamphlet developed for students considering a career in paediatrics
- Poster Board display developed for demonstration at national conferences (versatile content)
- Networks and linkages established for compiling information on the status of therapy services for Aboriginal communities

**Create a plan for professional development opportunities in all 5 provincial regions.**

Activities and Achievements

- Proposal developed and submitted to CYSN, MCFD to offer a professional development opportunity in each of the 5 regions (December 2005)
- Funding awarded March 2006.

**Explore innovative student fieldwork opportunities in paediatric settings.**

Activities and Achievements

- Draft information compiled regarding encouraging student practicums (March 2006)
- Advisory Network group focusing on issues related to student engagement in paediatrics

**Ensure timely communication of information between the Provincial Consultant, Steering Committee, and other relevant parties.**

Activities and Achievements

- Monthly reports submitted to the Provincial Steering Committee
- Monthly teleconferences with the Provincial Steering Committee
- Monthly teleconferences with the Provincial Therapy Councils
- Bi-Annual teleconferences with BC Paediatric Therapy Advisory Network
- Annual report distributed and posted on [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website (May 2005)
- Work plan developed and posted on [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website (June 2005)

**Planned Initiatives for 2006-2007**

- 1) Investigate use of Therapy assistants in paediatric settings
- 2) Deliver a professional development opportunity in all 5 provincial regions
- 3) Identify relevant factors affecting access to therapy services in Aboriginal communities
- 4) Disseminate information Promoting Manageable Workloads Guidelines
- 5) Disseminate Report & Recommendations from the Targeted Recruitment Strategies Project
- 6) Contribute to the development of Provincial Program information (brochures, Presentations, Guidelines, Program Logic Model, website)
- 7) Support the delivery of comprehensive, co-ordinated, and effective paediatric therapy services in all communities of BC

- 8) Develop stronger connections with Education and Health partners
- 9) Present recruitment board at National Conference
- 10) Engage student participation in paediatric settings
- 11) Development of the content of the [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website

### **Recommended Strategic Initiatives for Ministry of Children and Family Development 2006-2007**

The Ministry of Children and Family Development can support the recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists by championing the following initiatives:

- 1) Implement a funding allocation model for therapy resources that is sensitive to population characteristics of the diverse regions and communities of British Columbia
- 2) Support co-ordinated implementation of a wage scale that acknowledges the education, experience, and demand of paediatric therapists across employment sectors, with the goal of alleviating some current challenges with hard-to-fill vacancies. This initiative may require collaboration amongst the Public Sector Employer's Council, employers, therapists, union bargaining representatives, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health, in order to be successful
- 3) Resource support to implement recommendations from the Targeted Recruitment Strategies Report (ie. Provincial Systematic Recruitment Plan)
- 4) Promote Manageable Workloads for paediatric therapists as a strategy to encourage effective services for children, and retention of therapists in public practice paediatric settings
- 5) Support a provincial plan to increase the number of student seats for therapy disciplines across the province

### **Summary and Conclusions**

My sense of the past year has been that of gathering and sustaining momentum to improve the access to therapy services for the children in the communities of BC. The 2005-2006 year has been a time of putting into action the recommendations previously gathered that focus on the key issues affecting recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists. Several key components have contributed to making this possible: the Ministry of Children and Family Development has stated an interest, and has allocated funding, to revitalize services for Children and Youth with Special Needs; the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Councils are well established to identify and communicate relevant issues; the Provincial Steering Committee for the PPTC is engaged in directing and supporting the annual work plan objectives; and, therapists across the province are participating in the process to share their clinical experiences and professional expertise.

I have particularly appreciated therapists taking time to let me know what is happening in their communities. This feedback not only shares with me the 'Spotlights on Success', but also highlights the areas where more resources are necessary to help children to participate meaningfully in their lives. Some of the topics identified from these

conversations are that some vacancies are hard to fill, and barriers and opportunities on this issue have been identified; there is a shortage of therapists across all sectors, so the competition to encourage therapists to consider working in paediatric settings is high; practicing therapists face workloads that are challenging or unmanageable; and, there is room to improve the support for therapists to network, connect, and learn with one another.

I am encouraged by the activities and achievements of the past year. In looking ahead, I think the work plan for 2006-2007 builds on this success and demands deeper communication and commitment from the paediatric therapy community to establish British Columbia as the province of choice for paediatric therapists – so that the children in our diverse communities have access to services that can help them to participate meaningfully in their lives.

Respectfully submitted,

Christie Diamond  
Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant