



## **Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant**

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Third Annual Report from the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant (PPTC) 2006-2007  
April 30, 2007

### **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 April 2006 for the work plan for 2006-2007 included:

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

#### **Activities & Achievements**

- Consultation and collaboration with the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Children and Youth with Special Needs Policy, and the Early Years teams at the Provincial Office
  - Participation on development of Program Logic Models for Early Intervention and School-Age Therapy Programs
  - Participation in feedback processes for Service Level Reporting
  - Participation on the revisions for the Early Intervention Handbook
  - QSP List with Provincial Autism Initiatives Branch

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- Connections with the Ministry of Children and Family Development Regional Offices
    - Attendance at Interior Regional Paediatric Therapy Services Meeting and teleconferences (May 2006)
    - Collaboration and coordination of the Vancouver Island Regional Paediatric Therapy Services Meeting (March 2007)
  - Contact with staff within Ministry of Health, Health Human Resources; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Advanced Education  
Participation in discussions and disseminating information about the BC Loan Forgiveness Program
  - 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
    - Member of the Provincial Steering Committees for IDP and SCD
    - Member of the Steering Committee for the Partnerships Project Renewal Initiative
  - 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
    - Awareness of the ongoing development of both the SLP Evidence Paper and SLP Core Services Document
  - Communication with Department Heads, Clinical Fieldwork Co-ordinators, Professors at UBC School of Rehabilitation Sciences, and School of Audiology and Speech Sciences
  - Communication with Professional Associations and Regulatory Colleges re: work plan
    - Representation from all groups on Advisory Network
    - Assisted in the distribution of the Physiotherapy Association of BC (PABC) Public Practice Survey for Paediatrics (September 2006)
    - Participation at joint professional association and MCFD meetings (January, February 2007)

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

Activities and Achievements

- Operation and development of [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website
- Creation of database to track vacancy information
- Targeted Recruitment Strategies Project – Final Report Released (October 2006)
  - OT, PT, SLP Teams selected from North, Interior, Fraser and Provincial Health Services Authority regions (November 2005) to research and develop regional reports on recent initiatives and recommendations on specific recruitment initiatives
- Information pamphlet developed for students considering a career in paediatrics (May 2006)
- Poster Board display presented at UBC OT & PT Job Fair (May 2006)
- Responding to email and telephone inquiries from interested practicing therapists and students about paediatric settings and opportunities in BC

**3. 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 (September 2006)
- Review of Recruitment and Retention Guidelines
- Employer representation on BC Advisory Network for Paediatric Therapists
- Letter of support written for opportunity to address wage inequities during bargaining process
- Communication with therapists regarding work environments
- Communication with employers regarding recruitment strategies
- Compilation of contact information of paediatric therapy employers

**4. 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

- Promoting Manageable Workloads for Paediatric Therapists in BC – Final Report Released November 2006
- Informal feedback solicited via email and telephone (December 2006-February 2007)
- Project Coordinator identified to prepare presentation materials including a Powerpoint presentation and Executive Summary (March 2007)
- Initial Provincial Discussions on Final Report findings (March 28, 2007)

**5. Support the delivery of comprehensive, co-ordinated, and effective paediatric therapy services in all communities of BC.**

Activities and Achievements

*This Objective became more of a guiding principle to the whole work plan rather than an individual objective.*

**6. Understand the relevant factors, and work towards improving access to therapy services in Aboriginal communities.**

Activities and Achievements

- Attended the Aboriginal Health Education Provider Summit (April 2006)
- Presentation of “Access to SLP Services in Aboriginal Communities” at the Aboriginal Supported Child Development Symposium (September 2006)
- Advisory Network group focusing on access to therapy services in Aboriginal communities (opportunity to learn from the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNEESC), ASCD program development, and Mt. Currie programs)
- Communication and collaboration with Regional MCFD Office re: Pilot Project to deliver SLP services in rural and remote Aboriginal communities

**7. Research the role of Rehabilitation Assistants to support the delivery of paediatric therapy services in British Columbia.**

Activities and Achievements

- Project Leader hired (September 2006)
- Provincial Inventory conducted (September 2006)
- Literature and Jurisdictional Reviews completed (November 2006)
- Rehabilitation Assistant Education Programs in BC – Information table (November 2006)

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- Stakeholder feedback solicited (December 2006)
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- Final Report with Recommendations (January 2007)
  - 5 Regional Teleconferences to share Final Report Findings and solicit feedback (February 2007)
  - Inventory of Tasks and Activities for Therapy Assistants in Paediatric Settings (under development, March 2007)

## **8. 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)
  - ‘SLP Resources’ Page developed in collaboration with SLP Council (July 2006)
  - Web Guru hired to provide technical support to employers and applicants; website maintenance; database development; plans for website development (September 2006)
- Regular Updates to Therapy Councils via teleconference participation
- Correspondence with therapists via email and telephone (Toll-free number continued)
- BC Paediatric Therapy Advisory Network – teleconference format to inform development of PPTC Work Plan

## **9. Deliver professional development opportunities in all 5 provincial regions.**

### Activities and Achievements

- Funding awarded March 2006 from CYSN, MCFD
- Survey questionnaires soliciting therapist input regarding location, timing, topic, presenter, sent May & October 2006
- Collaborations and discussions within regions to investigate feasibility of coordinating training with regional meetings
- “*Setting the Stage for Function*” with Kim Barthel, presented in Kelowna, October 23-24 to 35 Interior Region OT, PT, and SLP’s
- “*International Classification of Function*” with Dr. Johanna Darrah, and “*Clinical Problem Solving*”, and “*Understanding Interactions: An Introduction to the Enneagram*” with Kim Barthel presented in Nanaimo, March 26 to 37 Vancouver Island Regional OT, PT, and SLP’s

- “*Setting the Stage for Function*” with Kim Barthel, scheduled for Prince George April 16-17 to 36 North Region OT, PT, and SLP’s
- Preliminary discussions with the Fraser Region, currently no confirmed location
- Vancouver Coastal Region - TBA

#### **10. Explore innovations to engage students 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
- Attended UBC OT & PT Job Fair (May 2006)
- Participation in discussions related to Provincial and Regional MCFD grants to support student placements in paediatric settings

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

##### Activities and Achievements

- Participation in conversations about current MCFD supported initiatives: Knowledge Broker Study; e-Mentoring Pilot Project

#### **12. 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
- Annual teleconference with BC Paediatric Therapy Advisory Network
- Annual report distributed and posted on [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website (May 2006)
- Work plan developed and posted on [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website (May 2006)
- Administrative Support Contracted to support timely communication with relevant parties (September 2006-March 2007)

#### **Planned Initiatives for 2007-2008**

- 1) Develop an appropriate role for Therapy assistants in paediatric settings, including the development of tools to support therapists, employers, and therapy assistants in determining an effective and substantiated role for therapy assistants
- 2) Deliver a multiple level approach to support professional development opportunities for OT, PT and SLP’s working in paediatric settings:
  - Education Grants to attend World Congress of Physical Therapy (WCPT) &

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American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine (AACPDM) in Vancouver in 2007

- Professional development course in each geographic region
  - Support for planning a Provincial Paediatric Update Symposium
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- 3) Organize provincial discussions based on the *Promoting Manageable Workloads Project Report*
  - 4) Begin to prioritize and support the implementation of the recommendations from the *Targeted Recruitment Strategies Project*
  - 5) Contribute to the development of Provincial Program information (brochures, Presentations, Guidelines, Program Logic Model, website)
  - 6) Develop stronger connections with partners from Ministries of Advanced Education, Education and Health, School Districts and Health Authorities
  - 7) Present recruitment board at two National Conferences
  - 8) Engage student participation in paediatric settings
  - 9) Development of the content of the [www.therapybc.ca](http://www.therapybc.ca) website
  - 10) Participate in the design of a provincial mentoring strategy, informed by the evaluations of the Knowledge Broker and eMentoring Pilot Projects, and the role for designated clinical specialists for each discipline at a provincial level

### **Recommended Strategic Initiatives for Ministry of Children and Family Development 2007-2008**

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
- 6) Participate in the development of a comprehensive provincial mentoring strategy for Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and Speech Language Pathologists who work in paediatric settings. The scope of this strategy could include an Orientation checklist, Resource Guide, Access to Evidence summaries, planning Professional Development, Knowledge Brokering, mentorship for the development of clinical skills and professional judgment, and an identified provincial resource person for specific areas of expertise.

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## **Summary and Conclusions**

My sense of the past year has been that of establishing momentum to improve the access to therapy services for the children in the communities of BC. The 2006-2007 year has been a time of communicating the key issues affecting recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists to a wide audience of stakeholders. This communication and collaboration has been possible because of the contribution of many: the Ministry of Children and Family Development has stated an interest, and has allocated funding and resources 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; therapists across the province are participating in the process to share their clinical experiences and professional expertise; employers are contributing to the discussions to improve the success of recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists, and other community partners, including representatives from other program areas, professional associations, regulatory bodies, and university programs, are all participating in collaborative endeavors.

It has been a highlight and a pleasure to offer professional development opportunities in several regions of the province. They have proven to be an excellent opportunity to bring therapists together to learn new knowledge to inform their practice, communicate, network and share resources with one another, and share regional issues and ideas with the Office of the PPTC. I look forward to the opportunity to continue and expand this successful initiative in 2007-2008.

I have had the opportunity to present and participate in numerous meetings and committees where I was able to bring both therapy and recruitment and retention perspectives, including the Aboriginal Health Education Provider Summit, the Provincial Steering Committees for Infant Development and Supported Child Development, the Steering Committee for the Partnerships Renewal Initiative; several joint presentations with the Provincial Advisors for IDP, AIDP, SCDP and Children First to the BC Association for Child Development and Intervention (BCACDI), MCFD Assistant Deputy Ministers, MCFD Provincial and Regional Office personnel; and meetings with the provincial professional associations and the provincial MCFD CYSN Policy team. Participating in these opportunities seems important to ensure the perspectives of therapists are included, and to ensure that collaborative practice is embraced on a province wide basis across programs that provide services for children and their families.

I am encouraged by the activities and achievements of the past year. In looking ahead, I think the work plan for 2007-2008 will build on this success and continue to require deep commitment from the paediatric therapy community. Together we will strive 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