

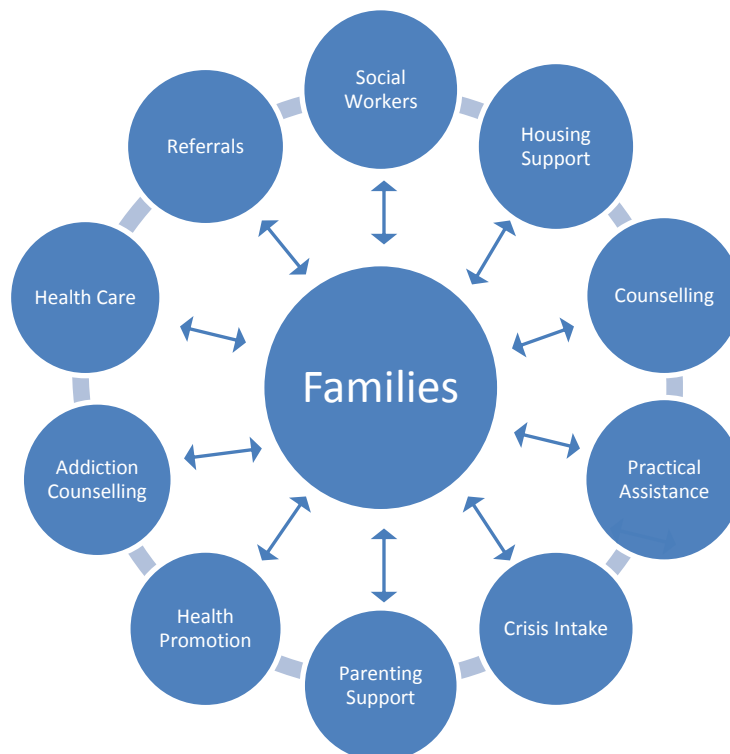
# Headstart Early Intervention Programs

## Model of Service

### What is a Headstart Program?

Headstart programs are early intervention programs that provide comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, parent involvement and support services to multi-risk children and their families. Headstart programs support school readiness by placing a particular emphasis on the development of social emotional skills, fostering healthy attachment, and supporting family and child mental health. Headstart programs provide multi-generational programming targeting both the child and the family. The programs' services and resources are designed to enhance children's physical and emotional well-being, establish an environment to develop strong cognitive skills and promote school-readiness, as well as provide direct services or referrals to families in need.

Headstart programs in Ottawa offer services to children 15mo-5yo through full or half day programs. Headstart programs are governed by the highest care standards under the Childcare Act 2014 ( updated Day Nursery Act), and are aligned with the ELECT framework. Headstart programs are licensed under the Ontario Ministry of Education. Headstart programs actively seek feedback from the families we served for continuous improvement. We value life-long learning and provide on-going opportunities for professional development.



## **How are we different?**

Headstart programs provide multi-generational programming (children, parents and legal guardians) to families with multiple risk factors that require multisystem, complex interventions to help children during their early years and produce better life outcomes, including increased school readiness. Some Headstart programs operate as a service of a larger organization such as local Community Health Centres and Children's Aid Society, and are therefore in a position to offer seamless referrals to a variety of medical and social services to the families attending the program. Headstart programs that do not operate under the umbrella of a larger organization are working in partnership with similar organizations to ensure holistic and seamless referrals and support to all Headstart families.

## **Who do we serve?**

All Headstart programs in Ottawa service socio-economically vulnerable communities as identified in the Early Development Instrument Cycle 3 and the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study 2011. Almost 100% of our families live below the poverty line, and qualify for childcare subsidy through the city of Ottawa. A significant percentage of our families have involvement from the Children's Aid Society and the majority of children we serve have delays in one or more developmental areas, whether diagnosed or undiagnosed at time of entry into the program. Families with CAS involvement and families presenting multiple risk factors such as homelessness or single parenting are given priority access to spaces.

## **What is our philosophy?**

### ***Working with the child: fostering healthy attachment***

Headstart programs' primary focus is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children and fostering healthy, secure attachment. Feelings of attachment influence social development, self-concept, and self-regulation, which are the foundation of school-readiness.

### ***Working with the family: promoting family engagement***

Headstart families sometimes struggle to meet their basic needs and require services, resource awareness and support to help their child(ren) thrive and grow. Headstart families are continuously provided with opportunities and support for growth and change through services specifically focused on child development, speech and language, positive parenting, child and family literacy, food security and nutrition.

## What are the benefits and services provided to our clients?

### ***To the child:***

- An environment that promotes positive and supportive relationships, fosters healthy attachment and builds resiliency
- A quality educational program that aligns with the ELECT framework to promote school readiness
- Standardized assessments to support individualized programming (Brigance Inventory of Early Development II)
- Developmental screenings (Nippissing) and referrals
- Nutrition (NutriStep) and dental screenings and referrals
- An environment that promotes language development, physical activities, and social skills development
- Nutritious menus reviewed by a registered dietician
- On-site speech and language assessments, referrals and support through First Words-CHEO
- Coordinated child-centered interventions with First Words, Children Integration Support Services (CISS), Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre (OCTC) and/or Children's Aid Society (CAS), as relevant
- Transportation to and from the program
- Special needs support and service coordination through Children Integration Support Services

### ***To the families:***

- A sense of belonging
- An opportunity to be actively engaged in their child's development
- Intake process that aligns services, community resource information and referrals with individual family needs
- Support for families to advocate for themselves and for their child in the school system
- Parenting workshops (i.e. *Kids Have Stress, Too* ; *Mini-Mind Masters* ; transition to school)
- An *active pursuit* model of family support
- Case management as required (service coordination)