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*"providing centralized
access to children's and
developmental services"*

A Message From The Executive Director

On a day-to-day basis Contact Hamilton continues to fulfill its key mandate in providing individuals and families with centralized access to children's and developmental services. It is a crucial service that is highly valued by consumers and professionals. And it is a service that we are continually attempting to improve by refining our processes, extending the reach of our technology, and establishing new partnerships.

This past year, Contact Hamilton has also been extremely busy with various community planning and development initiatives. The cornerstone of this work was the completion of two Community Service Plans. The Plans established a vision and a set of priorities for children's and developmental services in Hamilton.

We know, only too well, from the experiences of the people who use our services that the needs of individuals and families are often great. We are also painfully aware that resources are limited and many people are required to wait for services. Nevertheless, our day-to-day experience and our planning activity also tell us that the Hamilton community and service providers possess a great deal of strength, compassion and resourcefulness. There can be no doubt that the foundation of the service system is strong and striving to be better.

Oksana Plawiuk Fisher

Community Service Plans: A Vision for the Future

The Hamilton community now has a new set of blueprints for strengthening and improving its system of children's and developmental services. Two new Community Service Plans – one for each sector – were completed last year, under the leadership of Contact Hamilton.

The plans, sought to answer the following key questions:

- *What is the nature and magnitude of the demand for ministry-funded children's/developmental services and supports within Hamilton?*
- *What resources are available to respond to that demand & how are they currently being used?*

- *What are the identified strengths, weaknesses and pressures of the current service system?*
- *What should be the priorities for enhancing the current service system over the next three years?*
- *Where are the opportunities to address population well-being and achieve positive change within the current system?*
- *What are the characteristics of the local community that need to be taken into account when planning?*
- *What areas require further exploration?*

New funding For Developmental Services

Hamilton's developmental services system received an increase of \$116,571 in provincial funding for the Foundations initiative, to help young adults with developmental disabilities make the transition from school to work or other community activities. The initiative is designed to provide opportunities for continuing education, personal growth and development and to help young adults achieve their goals for community living. Local agencies offering Foundations sponsored programs include: Catholic Family Services, CHOICES, Lawson Ministries and the YWCA.

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New Funding For Children's Services

The Children and Youth Mental Health Fund, announced by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services last year, will provide this community with funding to support new services and enhancements to existing services. The fund was designed to support the development of integrated and effective treatment to children and youth with social, emotional or behavioural problems, mental health issues or psychiatric disorders, and their families.

The Regional Office requested that Contact Hamilton facilitate the local planning process. A planning group, consisting of direct service providers and representatives from other key sectors, came together to determine the priority needs and the allocation of funding.

The result was that the planning group endorsed eleven projects that would take advantage of a funding allocation of just over \$1 million for Hamilton. The projects involve collaboration and partnership among service providers, as well as linkages with various community organizations and groups, including youth justice services, school boards and multicultural groups. A brief listing of the proposed initiatives is provided below:

Initiative	Lead Agency
Support for Children with Complex Needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodation Supports Wrap Around Family Support Program 	Rygiel Supports for Community Living Lynwood Hall Child and Family Centre Catholic Family Services
Community- Trauma Outreach Services	Community Child Abuse Council
High Risk and Youth Justice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated program assessment & treatment Alliance for Sexual Abuse Programs 	Child and Adolescent Services Community Child Abuse Council
Community Resource Support	COAST
Street Youth: Mental Health Outreach Services	Good Shepherd
Early Intervention/ Prevention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Attachment Intervention Parental Relief Group Interventions 	McMaster Children's Hospital Grace Haven McMaster Children's Hospital

A Closer Look At The System Of Supports For Children & Youth Kids With Complex Needs

Over the past few years, the children's and developmental services systems have been increasingly challenged in their ability to support children and youth with complex needs, and their families. In May 2004, the Regional Office requested that Contact Hamilton facilitate a planning initiative involving service providers from both sectors to develop a

plan for continuing to respond to these critical service pressures.

A working group has been meeting since the fall to consider various issues and develop recommendations for the Regional Office to consider. The final report will be completed in May 2005.

Board of Directors:

Departures And New Appointment

Last year, Contact Hamilton's Board of Directors saw the departure of two of its longest-serving members. However, it was with great pleasure that the Board welcomed a distinguished new member.

Brian Guest and Leslea Peirson completed their second terms as Directors in October 2004.

Both were founding members of the board, having served as Directors since 1999. Brian and Leslea made outstanding contributions over the years and will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege of working with them. The Board and the staff of Contact Hamilton offer heartfelt thanks and best wishes to Brian and Leslea.

New board member Dr. Lindsey George is well-known and highly respected, not only in her professional capacity as a psychiatrist and an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at McMaster University, but as a volunteer who has led numerous key provincial and community initiatives. She is currently head of the mental health rehabilitation service at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, and director of the Hamilton Addictions and Mental Health Network. Her most recent voluntary activities have included a leadership role in investigating the housing needs of people with serious mental illness in Ontario and serving as Champion for the Early Years Centres Reference Committee in Hamilton. Her passion, expertise and commitment are huge assets for the board.

Contact's Information System Extends It's Reach

In March 2003, Contact Hamilton, together with Contact Brant, Niagara and Haldimand and Norfolk implemented an information system, called WebTracker. WebTracker supports numerous functions, including centralized intake, referral tracking, waitlist management and community planning. As this system matures and the database grows, WebTracker will be an invaluable source of data to assist service providers and the Ministry in system planning.

Over the next year, the Contact agencies and eight community agencies within the Hamilton Niagara Region will be participating in a pilot project. Using a modified version of WebTracker, Contact and the agencies, will send intake reports, referral forms and updates electronically. It is hoped that this will save time, reduce paperwork and facilitate the transfer of information more quickly, thus making the children's and developmental service system more efficient and more responsive.

Contact

Annual Employee Recognition Award!

The Face And Voice Of Contact Hamilton

In 2002, the Board of Directors established an annual award to recognize an employee who, over the past year, demonstrated a commitment to the mission and values of the organization in their interactions with clients, families, service providers and colleagues.

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Planning For A New Inpatient Child & Adolescent Mental Health Program

McMaster Children's Hospital is expanding regional specialized child and adolescent mental health services, to include a 22-bed inpatient unit as well as mobile outreach, consultation and education services. Implementation of the program is expected in 2007. The Hamilton District Network, co-chaired by Contact Hamilton and the Hamilton District Health Council has completed a number of local planning activities to support the implementation of the unit.

... A Vision For The Future

(cont'd from pg 1)

The plans – the first of their kind for the children's and developmental service systems in Hamilton – established a vision and a set of priorities for the systems, while also documenting the needs of individuals and the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in services.

The collection and analysis of information as well as the development of the vision and strategic directions involved numerous stakeholders and members of the community. The recommendations of each of these plans involve extending the reach of the service system to respond to a wide range of community needs.

The plans were designed to build the capacity of the service system through better data, improved practices, enhanced opportunities for collaboration, and stronger links with the broader community and other service sectors.

In February, the Regional Office of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services provided a formal response to the recommendations. Contact Hamilton has been requested to facilitate the development of a work plan and coordinate the implementation of this plan. We will do so, working closely with the children's and developmental services system partners.

As the conclusion to each plan states, "The task that lies ahead for all involved is to continue working together to make this vision a reality. The completion of this plan is not the end, but only a beginning."

Both Community Service Plans and the Ministry's responses are available online through Contact Hamilton's web site: www.contacthamilton.ca

Community Partnerships

Over the past year, Contact Hamilton has continued to build and strengthen partnerships in several areas. Through these partnerships, Contact Hamilton is able to improve access to services for the individuals and families we work with, coordinate access with other systems, contribute to community development initiatives and support research. Examples of recent partnerships include:

- A protocol with Early Words, the community's preschool speech and language service. Through this partnership, children and families who require the services of either Contact or Early Words are more readily identified, and linkages between our organizations are improved.
- A protocol with the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board and Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District Board. This protocol is focused on assisting students who have developmental disabilities and their families to plan for the transition from school. A process has been put in place to

identify students graduating from high school and to link them with Contact Hamilton. Through this protocol, the developmental services system is better able to anticipate and plan for graduating students. Individuals and families benefit from a coordinated and centralized process for accessing the adult developmental services supports.

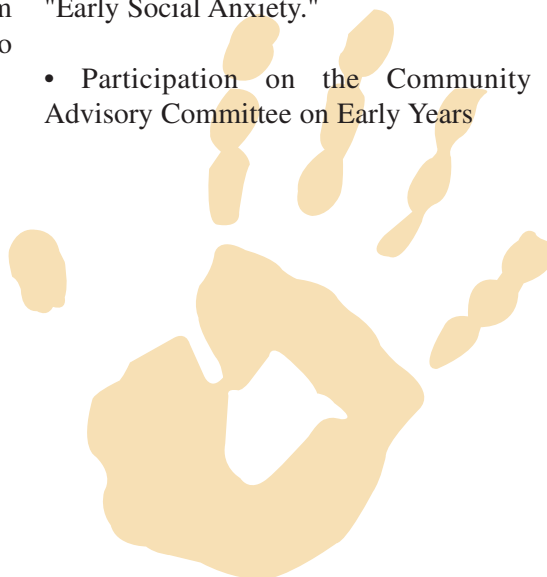
- Children's and Developmental Services Community Database: Contact Hamilton has entered into a formal partnership with Community Information Service. Work is underway to support a centralized database of information about community services for children and youth with behavioural, emotional, mental health, and developmental concerns, and community supports for adults with developmental disabilities.
- Support of two research initiatives that are being conducted through McMaster University: "Bringing Children's Mental Health Research Information Home" and "Early Social Anxiety."
- Participation on the Community Advisory Committee on Early Years

Volunteer Board of Directors

Dirk VanderBent, Chair
 Beverley Wasmund, Vice-Chair
 Rick Helm, Past Chair
 Lindsey George
 Lynne Godbout
 Shirley Mitchell
 Madina Wasuge

Executive Director

Oksana Plawiuk Fisher



Annual Employee Recognition Award!

(cont'd from pg 3)

Receptionist Jay Chauhan – the face and voice of Contact Hamilton for many of those who phone or visit the office – is the latest recipient of the annual employee recognition award. The award recognizes Jay's contributions to Contact Hamilton and the exemplary manner in which she upholds the values of the organization.

First impressions are always positive with Jay at the front desk. Visitors, staff and service providers alike have praised her for the respect and consideration she shows to all. Her ability to remember the names of clients and family members underlines the fact that she treats each person as an individual and makes an effort to understand and respond to each person's situation. As her colleagues have observed, Jay always wants to be on top of every situation and accountable for what she does.

2003/04 Statistics	
Individuals Served	5,914
RPAC Meetings	120
Resolution Meetings	46