

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Bryna Warshawsky, Acting Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 March 21

HEALTHY BABY HEALTHY BRAIN CAMPAIGN: THE HOW TO CAMPAIGN

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 039-13 re “Healthy Baby Healthy Brain Campaign: The How to Campaign” be received for information.

Key Points

- The Health Unit participated in a campaign promoting a new provincial web resource that provides parents with information on important actions they can take to foster their baby’s brain development.

Background

Healthy Baby Healthy Brain (HBHB) is an awareness campaign developed by the Best Start Resource Centre. Best Start is Ontario’s Maternal Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre which supports service providers who are working on health promotion projects to improve the health of expectant parents and their young children. The Health Unit implemented this campaign at the local level, acknowledging the importance of supporting early brain development through healthy child development.

There is significant research which concludes that the early childhood years are a sensitive period posing great opportunities, and also risk, to the developing brain. The Best Start Resource Centre completed a survey of parents of young children (Early Brain Development, Parent Knowledge in Ontario 2011) to better understand their attitudes, knowledge and resource needs as they relate to early brain development. The results of the survey indicated that parents want specific information and practical ways (such as tips, activities, approaches, and do’s and don’ts) to help them do what is best for their child’s brain development. The HBHB campaign is in response to the survey findings and is geared to providing parents with information on important actions they can take to foster their baby’s brain development.

The objectives of the campaign are directed to both the service providers and to parents. Service providers will have greater access and use of evidence-based resources for parents to support early brain development. Parents will benefit from the campaign by learning about:

- the impact of attachment, lifestyle and stress on children’s brain development;
- simple activities using all five senses to support their child’s brain development;
- why parents have the most important influence on their child.

The campaign materials direct parents to www.HealthyBabyHealthyBrain.ca website containing numerous short online video clips showing everyday interactions between parents and children and includes advice from professionals.

The Health Unit's Contribution to the Provincial Campaign

Family Health Services dedicated resources to implement this HBHB campaign to help local families benefit from the web resource. The media campaign ran for the month of December and included:

- Core advertising of eight street level posters in the downtown London area (reach: 2,557,453 impressions)
- 50 interior bus cards and four exterior side bus panels (reach: 1,344,000 impressions and 1,556,824 impressions respectively)
- An advertisement in the Mom and Caregiver Magazine (reach: 50,000 readers)
- Ads in the following County newspapers: Strathroy Age Dispatch, Middlesex Banner, Parkhill Gazette, Dorchester Signpost, Glencoe Alvinston Transcript (total circulation numbers: 43,968)
- Advertisement in the London Free Press (circulation: 83,000)

Public Health Nurses and Family Home Visitors also had a role to play in the campaign as they shared numerous promotional resources and key messages of the campaign with the families during home visits and with clients at Well Baby Clinics. If a family was not able to access the HBHB resources from the web, the staff shared the information using DVDs and print resources to ensure equal access to the information. The key messaging was also incorporated into broader health promotion strategies such as ongoing efforts to integrate messaging and resources into primary health care providers' daily practice through a fall workshop and mail outs.

Conclusion

Much of the effort with young families is working with parents and caregivers to help their children realize their full potential. Through home visiting, parenting classes, well baby clinics, prenatal classes and specialized services for infants and children, Health Unit staff members have multiple ways to share key messages and interventions with families. Participation in additional opportunities, such as the Healthy Baby Healthy Brain campaign that are evidence-based and ready-made, add to staff's abilities to make a positive difference for families.

This report was prepared by Ms. Nancy Summers, Manager, Family Health Services.



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<p>This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Reproductive Health Standard: Requirement 5 and Child Health Standard: Requirement 7.</p>
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