

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 November 21

**tykeTALK: THAMES VALLEY PRESCHOOL SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM,
THE INFANT HEARING PROGRAM - SOUTHWEST REGION
AND THE BLIND LOW VISION EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 125-13 re tykeTALK: Thames Valley Preschool Speech and Language Program, the Infant Hearing Program Southwest Region and the Blind Low Vision Early Intervention Program be received for information.

Key Points

- tykeTALK launched a re-designed website developed by resIM which includes an online referral form.
- MCYS replaced all the hearing screening equipment for the Infant Hearing Program with newer and more advanced versions. A new evidence based screening protocol as well as and a continuous quality improvement initiative were introduced.

tykeTALK

tykeTALK is one of 32 provincial preschool speech and language initiatives across the province of Ontario. The program focuses on the prevention, early identification and treatment of speech and language problems in children from birth to school entry age. The preschool speech and language initiatives, which commenced in November 1998, are 100% funded through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS). In April 2000, the Health Unit became the Lead Agency for the Thames Valley (Elgin, London, Middlesex, and Oxford) program. MLHU administers the program and contracts with partner agencies for direct service delivery. The provincial funding received is \$1,482,315. This has not increased in the past seven years.

For the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 the preschool speech and language program obtained the following deliverables as outlined in the contract between MLHU and MCYS:

- 5730 children who are currently between the ages of birth and 70 months have been identified with speech and language problems. This is approximately 12% of the preschool population in Thames Valley.
- 633 (55%) of referrals were made by parents/guardians.
- 1161 new referrals were received this year.
- 3,184 children received assessment and/or intervention this fiscal year.
- The average age of children at identification was 31 months.
- The average wait between date of referral and date of first intervention was 14 weeks.

In August 2013 the new tykeTALK website tyketalk.com was launched, and is connected with healthunit.com, the new website for MLHU. The tykeTALK website features an online referral form improving access to the intake process.

The Infant Hearing Program – South West Region

The provincial Infant Hearing Program (IHP) was announced in December 2000. This program consists of universal hearing screening for all babies, follow-up audiological assessment to confirm hearing loss in babies who failed the initial screening and communication development and supports for infants and their families where there is a confirmed hearing loss. MLHU hosts one of 12 Infant Hearing Programs across the province, covering the regions of Middlesex-London, Huron, Perth, Oxford, Elgin-St. Thomas, Sarnia-Lambton and Grey Bruce-Owen Sound. This program is 100% funded by MCYS. The base provincial funding received is \$835,886 and has not increased in the past five years.

For the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 the Infant Hearing Program obtained the following deliverables:

- 10,723 infants (99%) were screened.
- 110 infants progressed to an Audiology Assessment; 76% were seen by 4 months of age.
- 33 infants were identified with permanent hearing loss of any degree.
- 23 infants were fit with amplification.
- 19 infants began services to support communication development.
- 124 children between the ages of birth to 75 months received supports and services.

In the summer of 2013, MCYS replaced all the hearing screening equipment with newer and more advanced versions. One time funding was received to cover the costs of purchasing this. MCYS has introduced new evidence based screening protocols as well as and a continuous quality improvement initiative.

The Blind Low Vision Early Intervention Program – South West Region

The provincial Blind Low Vision Early Intervention Program (BLV) was announced in January 2007 and began providing service in our region in November 2007. It provides supports and services to families and children from birth to school entry that have been diagnosed as blind or having low vision. Services include specialized intervention for the family and child as well as consultation and support services to any early learning environment that the child attends. Family Support Workers are also available to provide short-term counseling and support to families following the diagnosis and during key transitional times. This program covers the regions of Middlesex-London, Huron, Perth, Oxford, Elgin-St. Thomas, Sarnia-Lambton and Grey Bruce-Owen Sound. As the lead agency, MLHU administers the program and contracts with partner agencies for direct service delivery. This program is 100% funded by MCYS. The provincial funding received is \$158,702 and has not increased since the program began in 2007.

For the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013 the BLV Program obtained the following deliverables:

- 35 new referrals were received and children began intervention within 5 weeks of referral
- Average age of referral was 19 months
- 123 children received service this fiscal year

All three early identification programs ensure a timely response to families experiencing speech, hearing and vision challenges. They integrate with health unit programs aimed at family-centred care.

This report was prepared by Ms. Diane Bewick, Director, Family Health Services.



Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

<p>This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines: Child Health Program Goal: To promote the health of children and youth.</p>
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