



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Graham L. Pollett, MD, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health

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**EVOLUTION OF THE LET'S GROW PROGRAM:
DELIVERY OF AN ON-LINE PROGRAM TO GENERATION Y**

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 073-12 re Evolution of the Let's Grow Program: Delivery of an On-line Program to Generation Y be received for information.

Background

From the Fall 2000 to December 2011, the Health Unit has provided parents with practical information about child growth and development, speech and language, nutrition, safety, and play & stimulation through the Let's Grow program. The program consisted of 12 separate mailings that started from birth and continued until the child reached five years of age. Past evaluations of Let's Grow have indicated that parents find the age-paced information that they received very useful. Despite this, over the last several years, there was a decrease in enrollment and a significant decrease in self re-registration after Issue 7. This decrease may be due to the fact that young families prefer to receive their information electronically as evidenced in the Health Unit report, entitled Profiling Media Consumption Habits of Various Generations, which provided information on how London residents prefer to receive public health information. Thus, Health Unit staff members have worked towards evolving this valuable information tool into an electronic format.

Current Program

The bilingual on-line Let's Grow program, free to all parents of children from birth to age five years, has been available since January 2012. Parents in Middlesex-London can now receive timely emails to access the newsletters electronically. Each e-newsletter provides the same practical information about child growth and development, as well as links to community resources, websites, and more, that was provided in the mailed paper copy. The Let's Grow webpage on www.healthunit.com is accessible to everyone.

An information letter about the on-line Let's Grow program and how to register is included in the Obstetrical Preadmission Clinic's booklet for expectant mothers at London Health Science Centre (LHSC) and at Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital (SMGH). An in-service about this on-line program was given to all LHSC Obstetrical Preadmission Clinic staff in early January 2012. About 80% of deliveries go through this clinic. Thus, they are a critical partner to engage in the dissemination strategy. On the post-partum Mother Baby Unit at LHSC, bookmarks are available at the nurses' station, as well as posters in every room. These bookmarks and posters are seen throughout LHSC and SMGH.

All pre-existing clients receiving newsletters by mail received written notification of the program going on-line in their last mail out between October and December 2011.

A Fact Sheet for professionals was emailed to all staff and several in-service sessions were conducted including discussions with the hospital liaison nurses, prenatal teachers, family home visitors, nurses in well baby clinics and other community settings.

Newsletter articles, emails, displays at health fairs, posters, bookmarks, and fact sheets have been distributed through the entrance packages for elementary schools, secondary school newsletters, Physician Outreach mailing, workplace mailing, licensed child care centres, Ontario Early Years Centres, and public libraries. In-services have been offered for community partners working with parents. These in-service presentations are computer interactive emphasizing how parents can utilize this on-line program and register for age-paced email alerts and how professionals can use this as a tool for parents who do not have access to computers or have English as a Second Language.

Summary

Let's Grow is an excellent example of an integrated project as all areas of the Health Unit have contributed age-appropriate links to health information and local community resources for parents. In the future, Let's Grow e-newsletters will be in e-magazine format with links added within the content of the e-magazine in addition to the separate LINKS pages. Registration will become easier with the new Health Unit website re-design. Social marketing will continue with more community and staff presentations, posters, bookmarks and social media such as Twitter. Integrating the Let's Grow website information with other Health Unit parenting information is an important priority to improve access for parents and professionals alike.

This report was prepared by Ms. Debbie Shugar, Manager, Reproductive and Early Years Program Team; and Ms. Nathalie Vandenheuvel, Public Health Nurse.

Graham L. Pollett, MD, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health