

How to Reach Francophones

Maternal and Early Years Programs



best start
meilleur départ

by/par health **nexus** santé

INTRODUCTION

This guide has been prepared to support Ontario service providers who are working with francophone communities within the maternal and child health fields.

It provides an overview of Franco-Ontarian communities, their needs and health promotion challenges. It highlights numerous suggestions for service delivery as well as descriptions of some successful and innovative programs across Ontario. The programs highlighted are only a sample of the range of programs available and many other effective francophone initiatives exist in Ontario.

It is important to bear in mind that Franco-Ontarians are not a homogeneous group: they represent every social class,

a number of ethnic groups and a wide range of educational levels. The fact that they speak the same language does not make the Franco-Ontarian community a single client group. The purpose of the guide is to improve our understanding of the Franco-Ontarian mosaic and to offer strategies to effectively reach out to the community in ways that can easily be adapted to each community's unique needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Best Start Resource Centre would like to thank everyone who contributed either by offering program suggestions or by sharing their knowledge of Franco-Ontarian culture. Louise Choquette was the project lead from the Best Start Resource Centre.

N.B.: The term “Franco-Ontarian” is used throughout the text to designate all Francophones living in Ontario.

Best Start Resource Centre

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1Z8

Tel: 1-800-397-9567 or 416-408-2249 • beststart@healthnexus.ca • www.beststart.org

*This document has been prepared with funds provided by the Government of Ontario.
The views expressed in the document are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry/Government.*

Community Profiles

WHERE ARE FRANCO-ONTARIANS LOCATED?

Approximately 611,500 Francophones live in Ontario, the largest Canadian francophone community outside Quebec. Francophones represent approximately 5% of the total population although the percentage varies widely from one region to another. In Ontario, the francophone population increased by 28,805 between 2006 and 2011. Three out of five Francophones were born in Ontario and one in five was born in Québec.¹

Region	Regional Distribution of Francophone Population (2011)	Percentage of Francophones in Total Regional Population	Regional Distribution of Total Francophone Population in Ontario (%)
Northeastern Ontario	127,265	23.4%	20.8%
Northwestern Ontario	7,610	3.4%	1.2%
Central Ontario	183,605	2.1%	30.0%
Southwestern Ontario	35,160	2.3%	5.7%
Eastern Ontario	257,870	15.4%	42.2%

Table 1 – Statistical Profile of Ontario Francophones

Sources: Data based on the Inclusive Definition of Francophone (IDF) from the 2011 Census Office of Francophone Affairs

The new Inclusive Definition of Francophone (IDF) defines Francophones based on their mother tongue, the language spoken at home, and the knowledge of official languages. The numbers may, therefore, differ from those recorded in the 2001 Census, and previous reports.

Recent immigration is particularly high for the Francophone immigrants compared with the total population. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of Francophones increased in Eastern and Central Ontario and decreased in the northern regions of Ontario, the result of immigration from other countries as well as from other Canadian provinces.¹



DESIGNATED REGIONS

*Ontario's French Language Services Act*² guarantees each individual the right to receive provincial government services in French in 25 designated regions. A list of the designated regions is available on the website of the Office of Francophone Affairs.

The Act applies to any service that is provided to the public by a ministry or an agency of the Government of Ontario. The *Ontario Regulation 284/11 Provision of French Language Services on Behalf of Government Agencies* clarifies that the agreements between the government and by third parties who provide services on behalf of the government need to identify the expectations.

Although some Francophones live in non-designated regions, they can generally obtain regional and provincial government services in French.

WHAT DO FRANCO-ONTARIANS NEED?

Health promotion must take into account 12 determinants of health, or factors that can influence health.³ A number of these determinants, such as culture and social support networks, have a significant effect on Franco-Ontarians. This influence is described below.

Societies that foster belonging improve health. The *Count Me In!* report⁴ asserts that the feeling and reality of belonging to a community are created as people come together and establish social networks. This strengthens the feeling and reality of belonging and this is known to make individuals and communities healthier.

According to the *Deuxième rapport sur la santé des francophones de l'Ontario*⁵ (Second Report on the Health of Franco-Ontarians), Francophones are more likely to state that they have a poor sense of belonging to their community in comparison to Anglophones. The 2012 report *La santé des francophones de l'Ontario*⁶ confirms that. Forty-two percent (42%) of Francophones and 35% of Anglophones indicate a low or very sense of belonging to their local community.

This report also indicates that, compared to the Anglophone population of Ontario, a larger proportion of Francophones:

- Perceives a lot of stress in their work life.
- Is obese.
- Is exposed to second-hand smoke.

The report noted many regional differences, such as access to health care services.

Health promotion activities aiming to reduce these health issues would be beneficial. Maternal and early years program may be able to integrate many of these.



Challenges of Francophone Outreach

In addition to the challenge of the geographic distribution of the francophone population, there are a number of other challenges in reaching Francophones in Ontario: the sociocultural context, access to French-language schools, literacy levels, exogamous families, the multicultural context and the working environment of francophone service providers. The following pages offer descriptions of these challenges and suggested strategies to address them, along with some programs examples.



SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

Although it represents only 5% of the total population of Ontario, the francophone population is highly diversified with respect to the socio-demographic factors of education, income, age, geographic location, origin and language spoken at home. This makes it difficult to generalize, although certain elements hold true:

Franco-Ontarians often belong to two cultures and languages and this is probably their distinguishing characteristic.

- If they come from another country, they keep elements of their native country and adopt some of English Canadian culture.
- If they come from Quebec, they keep elements of Quebec culture and adopt some of English Canadian culture.
- If they are Franco-Ontarian by birth, they have assimilated aspects of both French and English Canadian culture since childhood.

Franco-Ontarian social norms can vary somewhat as well. The report *Si je savais comment... Rejoindre les francophones Faut l'faire!*⁷, notes that:

- Interpersonal relationships are very important to Franco-Ontarians and they need to establish a rapport with people before they can work with them. It is important to establish this relationship, even though it can take time.
- For some people, French is sometimes considered primarily a spoken language.
- Francophones prefer simple, practical ideas and solutions to long analyses, theories and speeches.

Convenience also influences the programs in which Franco-Ontarians participate:

- English-language programs are sometimes preferred for a variety of reasons. Pregnant Francophones may prefer an English-language prenatal program because their doctors are anglophone and they want to know and use the English-language terminology. Newcomers to Ontario may choose English-language programs in order to improve their English skills.
- Since French-language programs are offered less frequently and in fewer geographic regions, some Francophones participate in English-language programs because they are delivered closer to home, at more convenient times, or, in the case of programs for families, to accommodate their anglophone partners.

Suggested strategies:

- Franco-Ontarians have an oral tradition and prefer discussions and the use of humour to more formal presentations.
- Franco-Ontarians will be more influenced by a messenger with whom they can identify and who is passionate about a subject than by a well-known speaker who comes from outside the community.
- Word of mouth is an effective promotional method, especially in rural environments.
- French-language social activities such as intergenerational get-togethers, family celebrations of Saint-Jean-Baptiste day and community picnics can help to strengthen the feeling of belonging for Francophones.
- It is important to encourage Francophones to identify as such and to request French-language services. This will reinforce the need for English-language organizations to offer such services.
- Emphasize simple, practical solutions that are easily applicable to everyday life: easy recipes that the whole family will enjoy, craft activities using readily available materials, physical activities that can be enjoyed close to home, time-saving solutions and so on.
- As with all groups, it is important to build upon current behaviour. For example, if a mother takes her baby out in the stroller every day, encourage her to take a friend and her baby too. If a parent makes his or her own baby food, make suggestions for enhancing the nutritional value of food prepared at home.
- Make sure your message reflects the priorities of the audience of interest. This applies in a variety of sociolinguistic contexts. For example, it may be inappropriate to promote physical activity using images of expensive equipment when part of the population is unemployed or has to work two jobs to manage financially.

Baby Club – Ontario Early Years Centre – Kapuskasing

Providing a program specifically for Francophones helps strengthen social support and this program is a great example of this.

- A program for parents, grand-parents and caregivers of babies aged 0 to 2.
- Offers development activities and guests on topics such as nutrition and first aid.
- Cultural days are celebrated such as Halloween, Christmas, Mother's Day and Father's Day.
- This club offers an excellent opportunity for young Francophone families to meet. These can build links which they can maintain for years to come.



Information provided by Natalie Payeur

An Adapted Resource – Bébé en santé – Cerveau en santé

- The Best Start Resource Centre developed an awareness campaign on brain development. This campaign was directed at expectant parents and parents of children ages 0 to 3.
- The parent website developed for this campaign contains fifteen short videos on a variety of topics which impact on brain development: nutrition, attachment, play, physical activity, stress, etc. All the videos were done in English and French. The children and situations depicted are different in both languages but the messages stay the same.
- Links are also offered to obtain additional information on each of the subjects. On the French website, all the links go to French websites, of equivalent quality to those offered on the English website.

www.HealthyBabyHealthyBrain.ca

www.BebeEnSanteCerveauEnSante.ca



An Adapted Program – Connexions bébé Centre francophone de Toronto

- The Centre wanted to stay in touch with the mothers of babies after they had finished the Step by Step program for pregnant women, so a new program was created to reach these parents.
- The leader translated the Make the Connection booklets herself (www.firstthreeyears.org). She had to adapt some of the games and songs to ensure that the resources would be appropriate for a multicultural population. In the second year of the program, she received a grant to have the booklets revised by a translation agency.
- Promotion is done by word of mouth but also within programs, especially the Step by Step program.

Information provided by Kathleen Patterson

“I really appreciate the flexibility and accessibility of the breastfeeding consultant. It’s much easier for me to speak in French, especially when it comes to my health.”

A new mother and client of the Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming.



Info Autisme – Autism Ontario

- Info Autisme is a publication containing personal stories of French-speaking parents who have a child with autism, people touched by autism and professionals in the field. These articles reach out to other parents who are living with a child affected by an autism spectrum disorder, by offering testimonies and helpful strategies.
- Info Autisme Extra is an electronic news bulletin that offers information to direct the reader, who may be a parent or a professional, to services and resources related to autism spectrum disorders.

www.autismontario.com

Information provided by Yvonne Danyluck



PREPARATION FOR FRENCH-LANGUAGE SCHOOL

Research on the brain confirms that language development is very active before birth until age two and is one critical aspect of early child development.⁸ Healthy child development is a known determinant of health, so it is imperative to invest in areas that positively influence a child's health, learning capacity and social behaviour.

According to section 23 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, for a child to be eligible for admission to a French-language school, one parent of that child must meet one of the following requirements:

- the first language learned by the parent and still understood is French;
- the parent has received his or her primary school instruction in French;
- any child of the parent has received or is receiving primary or secondary school instruction in French in Canada.

The French-language expansion linguistic policy established in 2010 also offers the possibility for some children to be admitted to French-language schools.⁹ The people affected by these changes include:

- French newcomers.
- Newcomers who do not speak either French or English.
- Children whose grand parents had French-language rights.

Even if the parents fulfill one of the above conditions, the child must still be equipped to function in a class that is taught in French. Francophone parents of young children in Ontario therefore need to make sure they develop their children's French-language skills, often in addition to English, as this will facilitate their entry into the French-language school system. Programs which assist them in doing that can be particularly useful.

It is interesting to note that only three quarters (75%) of the children who have the right to education in French actually attend a French school in Ontario.¹⁰



Suggested strategies:

- It is important that parents value French-language learning, think about, and have opportunities to develop their children's French-language skills. Prenatal courses are an example of an opportunity to raise parents' awareness and help them to plan their future child's French-language learning.
- During activities with young children, encourage the children to use French while playing games, especially role-playing.
- A good library of French-language books makes it easier for parents to read in French to their children. In addition to books, also consider French-language games and videos. It is especially difficult for parents to get French-language books in rural areas. If French-language books are not available at your public library, ask the staff to do an inter-library loan for you.
- Read books in French to children on a regular basis during group sessions.
- When delivering French-language programs, take the opportunity to promote other French-language programs and resources. Encourage the parents to network: getting together outside the program, exchanging phone numbers, etc.
- Family life is the main conduit of language and culture. Emphasize to the parents the importance and integration of French in the family environment: speaking French at the dinner table, reading books in French, watching television in French, etc.

Resource and Activity Kits – Ontario Early Years Centre – Simcoe North

Some agencies have created kits for sale or loan to parents. Parents sometimes have difficulty getting French-language books and games, especially in remote regions. Different kits can be assembled for a variety of ages.

The Ontario Early Years Centre – Simcoe North loans theme totes to parents, containing a variety of games and books: felt pictures in theme sets, flash cards on sounds, parts of the body and letters, a reading kit, French-language song CDs and books.

The website of this Early Years Centres also offers many resources in French, such as videos and short articles, for parents who want to increase their skills in reading aloud.

<http://fr.oeycsimcoenorth.ca>

Information provided by Christine VanderByl



Je d'école – Partnership – Eastern Ontario

- This 5-week program helps prepare children for Kindergarten.
- It is inspired from other school preparation programs but puts more emphasis on language development and the construction of the francophone identity.
- The program was developed by the three francophone school boards of Eastern Ontario.
- It is offered in more than 30 schools, in collaboration with various partners, including the Vanier Community Service Centre.



Information provided by Martine Lévesque, Vanier Community Service Centre

TD Summer Reading Club – Toronto Public Library

- This program is offered in Canadian public libraries. The TD Summer Reading Club is a free bilingual program for all children (early years to 12 years old). It aims to transmit to children the pleasure of reading and being read to during the summer.
- When registering, children receive a free bilingual magazine. There are two magazines, one for early years and one for school-aged children.
- Online activities complete this program.

www.tdsommerreadingclub.ca

Information provided by Céline Marcoux-Hamade



Starting at birth, from home to the classroom in French – Parents partenaires en éducation

- A guide for Ontario future parents and parents of preschoolers.
- Contains all the necessary information to help parents make an informed choice to help their child grow up in French.

www.reseauppe.ca



Conversations – Réseau Parents partenaires en éducation

- Informal meetings with groups of parents to share challenges and strategies related to children development.
- The conversation themes are decided by the school committees. Themes related to early years are becoming very popular. Parents partenaires en éducation provides a facilitator and advertises the event.
- The tips are provided by the parents, for the parents, all in French. The parents realize they are not the only ones facing certain challenges and that there is a network of parents to help them.

www.reseaupe.ca



Math en famille –

Centre de santé communautaire Hamilton/Niagara

- This six-week program is for francophone parents and their children aged 3-6 years old. It helps them share their thoughts and understanding of mathematical concepts in a warm and welcoming environment.
- The program was promoted by the Coin de la famille (family centre) and Best Start Hub staff in a monthly calendar handed out to families involved in Centre activities, and to children aged 2-6 years old in the city's French-language child care centres and schools. A short article entitled, "Math: Your Kids Are Counting on You!" providing information about the program was also included in the school report of the school in which the activities took place.
- The program is successful for many reasons:
 1. The fact that francophone parents in a minority environment see that children's achievement at school improves when parents are involved in their education.
 2. Parents gained awareness of the importance of exposing their children to mathematical concepts in the early years so they can assimilate the concepts with greater ease and rapidity once they are at school.
 3. The program's level of structure, interaction with the parents and continuity over the weeks.
 4. A family meal before the workshop.
 5. No-charge registration.
 6. The opportunity to bring children younger or older than the 3-6 year old age group.

Information provided by Jacqueline Fillion

LITERACY LEVELS



The literacy level of Franco-Ontarians differs from that of other Ontarians. Literacy is a measure of how well adults use written information to function in society and the economy. According to the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey¹¹, even with a similar level of education, Francophones outside Quebec have a lower literacy level than Anglophones. Francophones are less likely than Anglophones to have developed frequent reading and writing habits in their daily life.

Many Franco-Ontarians have been educated in English and are more comfortable using written English. It is interesting to note that 64% of Francophones in Ontario chose to take the literacy survey test in English, a revealing statistic.

This finding is consistent with a needs assessment conducted by the Best Start Resource Centre in 2005 with Franco-Ontario service providers, which clearly indicated that the Franco-Ontarian general public prefers lower-literacy resources supported by visual indicators (pictograms, photos, graphics).

Many Franco-Ontarians identify themselves as “bilingual individuals” rather than “bilingual Francophones.” For them, bilingualism is the key value of Franco-Ontarian culture. The concept of “bilingual individuals” may be compared to some ambidextrous individuals who can use either hand to perform certain tasks but choose to use one hand for some tasks and the other for other tasks, depending on the situation.

Suggested strategies:

- Offer resources that take into account the possibility of lower literacy: posters, videos, photos, material written in plain language.
- Offer bilingual materials to parents because they may be more comfortable with material in English.
- Some Francophones are unsure if their level of French is good enough to join a French-language group. By reaching out to parents in their own homes first, home visitors can make them more comfortable to attend group sessions.

Jouer pour apprendre avec mon enfant – Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes

This family literacy program aims to increase the participation of fathers in their child’s learning. It can be particularly helpful if the only Francophone parent is the father.

- The program consists of eight workshops for fathers of children 3 to 5 years old.
- The mothers and other significant adults in the life of the child can participate in the workshops with the child.
- The program emphasizes play and action, as well as the interaction between the father, the mother and the child.
- The activities and promotional strategies are intended to spark the interest of the fathers and mothers.
- All the material is downloadable at no cost on the website.
- A free online training is also available on the website.

www.coalition.ca

Information provided by Michel Robillard



Coalition ontarienne de
formation des adultes



EXOGENOUS COUPLES

Parents play a central role in the preservation of mother tongues. The number of families in which one parent is Francophone and the other is not (exogenous unions) is increasing in Ontario. In 1971, the proportion of children living in an English-French exogenous family in Ontario accounted for approximately 38% of children living in a family with at least one French-mother-tongue parent and with children under 18 years of age. In 2006, this proportion had risen to more than 59%.¹²

French is the language most often spoken in the home for 54% of Francophones.¹³ When the mother tongue of both parents is French, most children keep their mother tongue (92%). When only the mother reports that French is her mother tongue, 32% of children keep their mother tongue. When only the father reports that French is his mother tongue, 12% keep their mother tongue.¹²

It is important to implement mechanisms to encourage the inclusion and involvement of anglophone partners in exogenous unions at both the preschool and school levels.

Suggested strategies:

- Prenatal education sessions can provide a good opportunity for educating parents about the terms of eligibility for French-language schools. This should be done in English-language classes as well as French-language ones in order to reach exogenous couples. It is also important to give parents suggestions for increasing the use of French at home.
- Encourage efforts made by partners whose first language is not French to participate in the sessions orally and in writing.
- Give parents bilingual materials to include both partners.
- When addressing a group in French that includes anglophone participants, speak slowly, write the key words on a blackboard and explain their meaning.
- Make it clear to anglophone parents their attitude toward French is more important than their ability to speak French. Their positive approach is crucial to instill a child's positive values towards French.
- Encourage the Francophone parent not only to speak French with his or her child but also to read in French, at an early age.

Play Groups – La Ribambelle

- Weekly parent-child play groups emphasizing French-language development.
- The facilitators always speak French to the children but may speak English to parents who don't understand French.
- Circle time provides an opportunity to all sit together and discuss certain concepts in French: shapes, colors, math concepts, series, alphabet, etc. This is done through songs, stories and activities. Images and 3-D objects are used to illustrate the concepts, making it easier for children who do not speak French to understand. If needed, English words are used. This way, parents learn the new words at the same time.
- Promotion and communication with parents is always done in French and English.

www.laribambelle.ca

Information provided by Camille Beaulieu



Integration of non-Francophone parents – Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud

Many initiatives aim to help the non-Francophone parents involve themselves in the academic life of their child:

- French classes are offered in the evening to non-Francophone parents.
- Vocabulary card sets labelled “French sounds” are offered to the parents. These cards provide the French phonetic pronunciation of common phrases, grouped in approximately thirty themes.
- A glossary of useful common expressions was produced to help parents who accompany a group of students for school outings.
- French-speaking parents may be paired with non-French-speaking parents to help them understand the French-language documents sent home by the school.



Conseil scolaire
de district catholique
Centre-Sud

www.csdccs.edu.on.ca

Information provided by Marie-Pierre Daoust

Playgroup at Ontario Early Years Centre – Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre

- The French program has evolved to meet the needs of exogamous families. There are now two groups: an immersion group and a French group. In the immersion group, French is used but non-Francophones are also welcome to express themselves in their own language. In the French group, only French is used.
- This arrangement seems to please everyone. The Francophones are more willing to help non-Francophones in the immersion group, knowing they can also take part in the French-only group. The non-Francophones feel more included and feel more comfortable practicing French without the pressure to be perfect.
- The ability to respond to the needs of both Francophone and non-Francophone families has created an environment where French-speaking families can practice their language and culture, but it has also given them the opportunity to be proud to be able to share and help the next generation of French speakers grow.

Information provided by Erica Selschotter

Partnerships with Anglophone Agencies – Centre francophone de Toronto

- The Early Years Services of the Promo-santé module (Health Promotion) of the Centre francophone de Toronto, offers, among other services, a clinic for children with developmental delays. They have little difficulty in reaching the clientele because numerous agencies, both anglophone and francophone, refer children to the service.
- To ensure effective client outreach, the staff members serve on both francophone and anglophone committees. In this way, there are many referrals from anglophone agencies for francophone children who might not have received service in their primary language.
- The Centre also notes that it is important to have bilingual promotional materials so that anglophone service providers can learn about the services that are delivered and refer people to Promo-santé as well.

Information provided by Agnès Dupin

Dream Big – Little by Little

A simple guide to building a francophone identity at home

This is a parent guide for exogamous families. It offers suggestions to help parents adequately prepare their child for entry into a French-language school. The booklet is divided into two parts: an English side and a French side. A leader's kit is also available.

- The English side is for the Anglophone parent and offers simple ways to support the French identity of the child.
- The French side is for the Francophone parent who may have had a variety of personal experiences and supports towards the French language.
- The manual was a collaborative effort between the Canadian Teachers' Federation, the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française and the Commission nationale des parents Francophones.

www.ctf-fce.ca



MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

The origins of Francophones in Ontario are changing gradually. Between 2001 and 2006, almost 45,000 Francophones settled in Ontario. Close to 20,000 came from Québec, 7,000 from other provinces and 18,000 from other countries. Francophone immigrants mainly came from Europe (36%), Africa (26%) and Asia (23%).

The make-up of the Francophone community varies from one region to another. In the North-East, less than one percent of Francophones were born outside Canada. In Toronto, almost half the Francophones were born outside the country.¹

Francophones who belong to a racial minority are considerably younger than the francophone general population: the percentage of youth in the under-20 age group is twice as high (39% compared to 20%).¹³ Issues related to childhood development are therefore even more important for this population.

Suggested strategies:

- Integrate all the activities for parents who are newcomers to Canada within other programs. They may not see a parenting skills development program as a priority if they are grappling with financial or legal challenges. It may be more effective to incorporate the following topics into one program for young parents: job search, access to medical services, access to legal services, access to the school system, access to child care services, planning a budget, developing a social support network, etc.
- Ensure that they are aware of French-language schools and the eligibility criteria. Depending on the parents' country of origin, French may be their second language and English their third. According to the French-language expansion linguistic policy, they may have access to French-language education.⁹
- During discussions, invite the participants to talk about their experiences in Canada and in their home country and encourage them to explain how these experiences are related to their traditions and customs.
- Use activities that can help the participants set up and expand their social networks, for example, by forming friendships with other participants.
- Offer activities designed to help with children's school integration: familiarity with themes such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Such celebrations are often integrated into school culture and it may be helpful for parents and children to be familiar with them and to know about the North American adaptations of these holidays (Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and so on). Give participants an opportunity to discuss the cultural variations of their home country.
- Provide activities in which parents can discuss their ideas about their traditional values and parenting styles in a new cultural context. How will they respond when their child behaves in ways that contradict their values? It may be helpful to invite parents who have already experienced this transition to contribute to the discussion and help to come up with solutions.
- As with all parents, provide activities that are based on problem solving and prevention: setting reasonable parenting expectations, establishing family rules, setting up a family routine, strategies for improving communication with their child, the principles of "natural consequences", opportunities for enhancing children's self-esteem, discussing the difference between discipline and punishment and so on.

Petits marmitons – Centre francophone de Toronto

- This program is offered once a month, on Saturday mornings, to parents accompanied by children 2-6 years old. Each session features nutritional information and cooking, as well as a physical activity component. During the session, a dietician provides general information on the types of fat, food labelling, etc.
- The recipes are selected or adapted to accommodate the various religions and francophone cultures of the program participants.
- Because it is offered on Saturdays, the program has been a good way to reach out to fathers who work during the week.
- The program has been successful from the start. Its organizers have had to set up two groups to meet the demand and there is always a waiting list.

Information provided by Suzanne Giroux



L'Éveil des tout-petits – Vanier Community Service Centre

- A program for vulnerable Francophone mothers and their children, 6-12 months old.
- This program is the follow-up to “Ça mijote”, a prenatal nutrition program and helps keep new mothers connected to their community.
- Many participants are newcomers and this program enables them to develop their social network.
- The program emphasizes child development through a variety of activities using all senses.
- Gift certificates for dairy products help meet the needs of these families.

Information provided by Martine Lévesque



Voir grand ensemble – Guide for cultural diversity dialogue

- A booklet to enable a dialogue on cultural diversity with parents and teaching staff.
- A facilitator guide and a presentation are also available.
- This booklet was produced by the Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française and the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

www.ctf-fce.ca



WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

Service providers working with Francophones in Ontario tend to share the following characteristics:

- They often work in smaller agencies with lower budgets and fewer staff members.
- Their mandates often require them to duplicate the services delivered to the English-language population.
- Their role is often that of a generalist; i.e., they represent a range of programs and topics for their agency, unlike their anglophone colleagues, who are often more specialized.
- Their teams are smaller, which makes it more difficult to find replacements so they can attend training sessions.
- They generally serve a population that is more geographically dispersed.
- They are often geographically isolated from one another.

Suggested strategies:

- Networking opportunities are key. Francophone service providers enjoy getting together to share their experiences.
- Given the constraints of human resources, finances and geographic isolation, travel for workshops and meetings must be planned well in advance and must offer clear benefits. Whenever possible, offer extensive agendas that can address the service providers' many needs (a variety of topics, opportunities for networking and for exchanging resources, etc.).
- If necessary, consider using methods that do not require travel such as teleconferencing or audiovisual conferencing, or seek out opportunities for subsidizing travel costs.
- Francophone service providers have often been educated in English and are not always comfortable with materials containing French-language technical terminology. In such cases, consider providing definitions or material in both languages. This will also make it easier to share knowledge and materials with colleagues and to use appropriate terminology in both languages.
- In regions that have not been designated bilingual, it is important for bilingual service providers to identify themselves as such to their employers (especially in large organizations), so their employers know they are prepared to deliver services to Francophones. This information must be communicated within the organization, especially if there is a great deal of organizational change.

Francophone Portal – Central-West Regional French-language Network

- The Regional French-language network of Centre-west created a portal which enables visitors to find out about services in French in Peel, Halton, Dufferin, Wellington and Waterloo.
- All the French-language services are identified and a calendar shows all the activities available.
- The development of this portal required a good collaboration between the organizations and offers a unified voice for French-language services.

www.portailfranco.ca

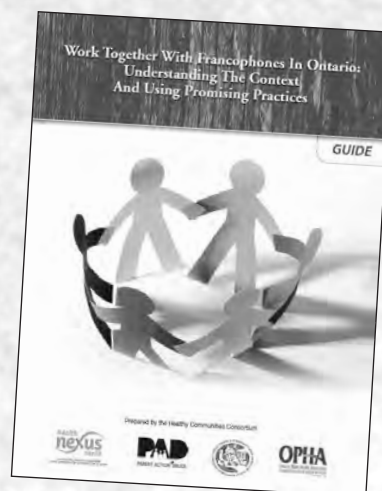
Work Together with Francophones in Ontario – HC Link

HC Link has produced a series of documents to help organizations who wish to collaborate with Francophones. These stem from the initial resource: *Work Together with Francophones in Ontario: Understanding the Context and Using Promising Practices*. One of the documents is titled *How to Engage Francophones...When You Don't Speak French!*

Here are some suggestions from these documents:

- Take the time to understand the Francophone context in Ontario and in your region.
- Create links with existing Francophone networks, either at the local, regional or provincial level.
- Clearly communicate your goals and objectives as well as the advantages of working together for the Francophone community and for your Francophone partners.
- Consult with other organizations in your region who work with Francophones.
- Be visible amongst Francophones to gain credibility.
- When offering community programs in French, ensure your staff is fluent in French and provide written information in French and English.
- Over time, work at building a bilingual organizational structure for your organization.

www.hclink.ca



Développement of the Réseau de santé maternelle et infantile – Best Start Resource Centre

- In 2006, the Best Start Resource Centre started to send e-mails containing information on maternal and child health through an informal distribution list. At the beginning, approximately fifty Francophone service providers were receiving those e-mails.
- A needs analysis was done in 2007 and it confirmed the interest in this service. Recruitment efforts were done through all the French-language activities done by the Best Start Resource Centre (workshops, conferences, etc.).
- By 2013, more than 500 people were subscribed to this list. They were receiving a monthly bulletin, as well as additional communications promoting resources and events in French. The list was then modified to increase the interaction between subscribers and the Réseau de santé maternelle et infantile was created: all subscribers could now reach all others by sending an e-mail. This network meets the needs of Francophone service providers who are often working in isolation.

Bulletin de santé maternelle et infantile



To register or for additional information: www.beststart.org/services/information.html

General Recommendations

RESOURCES

- Reflect the cultural context appropriately. Do not just translate a document – adapt it.
- Remember that some Francophones are not attracted to written communications.
- Resources from Quebec or France are not necessarily appropriate. Study them carefully before using them.
- Francophones sometimes feel that English-language resources are better. Create French-language resources that are of similar quality to those in English.
- Be aware that there are Francophones in every area of the province, even if they do not identify as such and the region has not been designated bilingual. This means that service providers should always provide French-language materials whenever it is available.
- Let participants know at all times that material is available in French.

PROGRAMS

- Find ways of overcoming geographic, financial and socio-economic obstacles such as carpooling for participants, lower costs for programs, subsidies from service clubs (Club Richelieu, Optimists' Club, etc.).
- Form alliances with other community agencies to further promote programs and events and make the most of available resources.
- Adapt programs to the specific needs of clients. The same approach or format does not necessarily work with the entire francophone population. A program that works in English will not necessarily work in French, and a program that works in rural Northern Ontario will not necessarily work in Hamilton. For example, it may be necessary to offer a drop-in prenatal program that is less structured than prenatal classes but still provides the information parents need.
- Involve a francophone representative from your audience of interest in designing and planning programs. This person can help with the development, promotion and implementation of the program.
- School is an excellent environment on which to base the growth of French-language services: child care centres, early years centres, toy libraries, etc. School can provide a lasting link between early childhood and school age. It can also provide an opportunity to share resources such as a library and toys.
- Before offering a French-language program per se, it may be necessary to promote the idea and the importance of a French-language program, especially to exogamous families.
- Use the early years to lay a foundation for healthy behaviours and solid links to community resources available in French.
- Be ready to deliver programs for smaller groups, e.g., groups of five individuals or five couples.



PROMOTION

- Francophone outreach can take more time and energy and can require a long-term relationship with the population of interest.
- Francophones in a minority environment have a strong oral culture, so word of mouth and personal contact are preferred mediums.
- The French-language schools are good points of contact for the francophone community. For topics related to preconception and prenatal health, the French-language colleges and universities can also help to reach Francophones.
- Advertising in French-language community newspapers and on community radio stations works well, but there are only a handful of French-language local newspapers and community radio stations in Ontario. For a list of French-language newspapers and radio stations, visit the website of the Office of Francophone Affairs. (www.ofa.gov.on.ca/en/franco-media.html)
- Since some Francophones prefer to get written information in English, it may be helpful to promote French-language programs in both French and English, depending on the local media.
- Francophones also sometimes get information through their social and community networks: professional associations, youth groups, education networks, religious organizations, health care and social services, sports and leisure associations, financial institutions, libraries, service clubs, etc. This can offer other ways of promoting a program or event, for example, through these groups' newsletters, bulletin boards, meetings and displays.
- During advertising campaigns, verify the effectiveness of the promotional message and any visual elements used with francophone clients, especially when a similar English-language campaign is used. A discussion group may be helpful in adapting the message for francophone clients.
- Electronic social media offers new opportunities to communicate at no cost with an audience that is spread out geographically. Build distribution lists and web pages to reach your French-speaking audience.



Opportunities

Ontario is conducive to linguistic duality and Franco-Ontarians are generally encouraged to use their mother tongue. In addition, francophone immigration in Ontario is creating a greater need for French-language services because many French-speaking immigrants are not proficient in English, which is not necessarily the case for native Franco-Ontarians.

Some organizations offer French-language resources designed for the early years and for health promotion:

Best Start Resource Centre. Supports service providers across the province of Ontario working on health promotion initiatives to enhance the health of expectant and new parents, newborns and young children. Many French resources are available on the website. (www.beststart.org)

Canadian Heritage. Canadian Heritage is responsible for national policies and programs that promote Canadian content, foster cultural and community participation, active citizenship and participation in Canada's civic life and strengthen connections among Canadians. The department sometimes provides financial support. (www.pch.gc.ca)

Cliquezsanté.ca. Provides an on-line directory of francophone health care and social services professionals in Ontario. The primary goal of Cliquezsanté.ca is to enable Ontario's francophone and francophile (someone who has an interest in francophone issues) population to have access to French-language health care services. The directory is an initiative of the Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario. (www.rifssso.ca)

Commission nationale des parents francophones. A national francophone umbrella organization of provincial and territorial organizations of parents who are working or interested in French-language education in a minority environment. The CNPF website is filled with research documents and practical references for service providers, including ideas for toys and nursery rhymes for preschoolers. (www.cnpf.ca)

Gouvernement du Québec – L'avenir en français program. The Québec Policy on the Canadian Francophonie offers opportunities for cooperation. The Gouvernement du Québec is interested in expanding the scope of its policy to early childhood, through two programs: the Programme d'appui à la francophonie canadienne and the Programme de coopération interprovinciale. These programs were developed to create partnerships and set up networks between Francophones in Quebec and those in Canada's other provinces and territories. For additional information, visit the website of Quebec's Secrétariat aux affaires intergouvernementales canadiennes. (www.saic.gouv.qc.ca/francophonie)

Office of Francophone Affairs. The Office is committed to ensuring that Francophones have access to provincial government services in French and that they contribute to the social, economic and political life of the province, while maintaining their language and culture. The website provides information about Ontario's francophone communities, announcements about events and information about the services and resources available. (www.ofa.gov.on.ca)

Office of the French-Language Commissioner. An Ontario organization mandated to ensure the application of the French Language Services Act. The Commissioner reports directly to the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs but works independently. His key roles are to increase the public service's awareness of the public's expectations and to investigate on complaints received in the application of the law. (www.csf.gouv.on.ca)

Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario (RIFSSSO). RIFSSSO is an organization of francophone health care and social service professionals, both individuals and groups. Its aim is to promote communication among its members and to assist them in improving the delivery of French-language services in Ontario. (www.rifssso.ca)

Société santé en français. Société santé en français (SSF) aims to protect the development of French-language health care for Canada's francophone minority communities. SSF has 17 regional networks, four of which are in Ontario. These networks can offer good opportunities for health promotion. Activities and programs that tend to receive SSF support are in areas such as networking, service structuring and the development and appropriate use of advanced technologies. (www.santefrancais.ca)



**"I really liked that we were a small group.
It was cosier, less awkward! We had a lot of fun!"**

- Expectant mother, prenatal classes at the Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming

References

- ¹ *Profile of Ontario's Francophone Community 2009*, Office of Francophone Affairs and The Ontario Trillium Foundation. (www.ontario.ca/francophones/profile-ontarios-francophone-community-2009)
- ² *Ontario's French Language Services Act (1986)*. (www.ofa.gov.on.ca/en/flsa.html)
- ³ *Public Health Agency of Canada* (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/determinants/index-eng.php)
- ⁴ *Count me in!* (www.count-me-in.ca)
- ⁵ *Deuxième Rapport sur la santé des francophones de l'Ontario*, Public Health Research, Education and Development Program, Institut franco-ontarien, Laurentian University, Louise Picard and Gratien Allaire, 2005 (www.sdhu.com/uploads/content/listings/rapport_sante_jan06.pdf).
- ⁶ *La santé des francophones de l'Ontario. Un portrait régional tiré des Enquêtes sur la santé dans les collectivités canadiennes (ESCC)*, Louise Bouchard et al., 2012 (www.rrasfo.ca)
- ⁷ *Si je savais comment... Rejoindre les francophones, faut l'faire*. Service de santé publique d'Ottawa-Carleton, 1995.
- ⁸ *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development*. Jack P. Shonkoff & Deborah A. Phillips. National Academy Press, 2000.
- ⁹ *Policies Governing Admission to French-language Schools in Ontario. Policy/Program Memorandum No. 148*. Ontario Ministry of Education. (www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/148.html)
- ¹⁰ *Using Data to Develop a Comprehensive Improvement Strategy in French-Language Schools in the Province of Ontario, Canada*. Dominic Giroux, Ministry of Education. 2007. (www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/improvementStrategy.pdf)
- ¹¹ *Study: Literacy and the Official Language Minorities*. Statistics Canada, 2006 (www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/061219/dq061219-eng.pdf).
- ¹² *Portrait of Official-Language Minorities in Canada: Francophones in Ontario*. Social and Aboriginal Statistics Division, Statistics Canada. Jean-Pierre Corbeil and Sylvie Lafrenière. Product no. 89-642-X. 2010. (www.statcan.gc.ca)
- ¹³ *2011 Census data*. Office of Francophone Affairs. (www.ofa.gov.on.ca)