Raising the Village
Measuring the Well-being of Children and Families in Toronto

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PART 1: DEVELOPING SHARED OUTCOMES

The Toronto Child & Family Network
About this report

This is the Executive Summary of a larger report by the Toronto Child & Family Network entitled *Raising the Village: Measuring the Well-being of Children & Families in Toronto (Part 1)*, which outlines five child and five family outcomes that will be monitored in order to understand the well-being of children and families in Toronto.

About the Toronto Child & Family Network

The Toronto Child and Family Network plans, coordinates and promotes the broad range of services for children up to 12 years of age and their families. It is a partnership between a cross-section of agencies and organizations who share the same goal of promoting positive outcomes for new and expectant parents, children, and families in Toronto. The Network includes representatives from municipal and provincial governments, school boards, hospitals, service providers, non-profit organizations, and advocacy groups. It is guided by a Steering Committee and six advisory and planning committees: Family Support, Early Learning & Identification, Early Learning and Care, Health, Aboriginal Advisory, and French Language Advisory. For more information, visit toronto.ca/childandfamilynetwork.

Acknowledgements

The Toronto Child & Family Network would like to thank everyone who contributed to this report and helped make it possible. A special thank you to the members of the Outcomes Work Group, who provided invaluable guidance to this project:

- Sarah Collier (Toronto Public Health)
- Nikita Desai (Mothercraft, Data Analysis Coordinator)
- Joanna Duarte Laudon (Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation)
- Carlos Duran (Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation)
- Sharon Filger (Macaulay Child Development Centre)
- Shauna Grant (Toronto Public Health)
- Michele Lupa (Mothercraft)
- Lorraine McLeod (Toronto Children’s Services)
- Andy Mong (Mothercraft, Data Analysis Coordinator)
- Stephanie Procyk (United Way Toronto)
- Peggy Thomas (Toronto Public Library)
- Francine Umulisa (Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services)
- Kathryn Underwood (Ryerson University)
- Nicole Welch (Toronto Public Health)
What are shared outcomes?

The term "outcome" simply describes a goal or end-result. The term can be used in many contexts. For the purpose of this report, outcomes describe desired improvements in the well-being of children and families in Toronto. They are called "shared outcomes" because they help focus the many organizations and institutions across the sector towards a set of common goals.

The outcomes in this report are considered population outcomes. This means they apply to the entire population of children and families in Toronto, and are analyzed at the population level rather than the individual level. Population outcomes can be distinguished from program outcomes, which measure the impact that an individual program has on its participants.

How will shared outcomes be used?

1 Measuring child and family well-being
In the next phase of this project, indicators will be selected to measure each outcome. Information collected from the selected indicators will help monitor the well-being of the child and family population in Toronto. This data will be made available in a public report card, and Wellbeing Toronto (toronto.ca/wellbeing).

2 Planning the service system
The role of the Toronto Child and Family Network is to help plan and coordinate the child and family service system by bringing together the many agencies, stakeholders and interests that make up the sector. Understanding the well-being of the population will help the Network plan and coordinate services to better meet the needs of children, families and communities.

3 Understanding vulnerability
One important reason for measuring well-being is to help policy makers, funders and service providers better understand vulnerability and identify vulnerable populations. This could include identifying particular neighbourhoods that require more support, or understanding the ways in which certain groups are vulnerable to poor outcomes. This information can help direct resources towards interventions that are known to improve outcomes and reduce vulnerability.

4 Supporting community-based planning
Local or community-based planning is important because every community or neighbourhood is unique and may have different needs. Population data analyzed at the neighbourhood level can support communities to identify priority areas for action within their community.
How were shared outcomes developed?

In Toronto, the conversation about shared outcomes began long before this project. For example, in 2011 Toronto Children’s Services wrote a report entitled *The Child and Family Outcomes Framework*. That previous work was invaluable, and provided a strong foundation and starting point for this project.

The shared outcomes project has been divided into five phases. Phase 1 began in the summer of 2012, and was lead by the Outcomes Work Group, a sub-committee of the Toronto Child & Family Network. Throughout the winter of 2013, the Outcomes Work Group consulted with each of the Network's six planning and advisory committees. In order to engage the broader community, a workshop was held in March, 2013 with participation from across the child and family sector. Feedback from these consultations was used to help the Outcomes Work Group develop the framework and outcomes contained in this report.

Phase 2 will involve selecting indicators that measure each outcome. In Phase 3 the Network will begin collecting data and establishing baseline measures. In Phase 4 a public report card on the well-being of children and families will be produced. Phase 5 will involve re-evaluating the outcomes and indicators, and making any necessary changes.

What is a framework?

Our framework describes the context in which child and family outcomes occur. Outcomes cannot be understood entirely on their own, and must be placed within a broader social and political context because they are influenced by many different factors. Our framework emphasizes the important role that the service system and broader community determinants play in affecting child and family well-being (see Figure 1 on page 4).

Six principles guided the development of the framework, each outlining an approach that was taken to understanding child and family well-being. The development of the framework was also guided by the Toronto Child & Family Network’s vision:

“Every child has the right to high quality, meaningful childhood experiences that respect diversity, are rooted in communities, and support engagement in life-long learning and healthy development. An inclusive, integrated and accessible community service system places children at the centre, appreciates their unique potential, is responsive to families and promotes positive outcomes.”
Guiding principles

The following six principles guided the development of the framework, and outline the approaches that were taken to understanding and measuring child and family outcomes:

1. **Holistic Approach**
   Child and family outcomes focus on well-being. A holistic approach to well-being captures the many aspects of a positive and fulfilling life, including but not limited to health and development. It also defines “family” broadly to include all arrangements and cultural definitions.

2. **Self-Actualization Approach**
   Every child and family is unique. Self-actualization emphasizes the importance of reaching one’s individual potential, rather than standardized benchmarks of development.

3. **Life-Course Approach**
   Experiences early in life shape a person's foundation for future well-being. A life-course approach highlights how child and family outcomes will be different at each stage in life, and will build on each other over the life-course into adulthood.

4. **Community Approach**
   Children and families are embedded in communities, both residential and relational. A community approach to child and family well-being emphasizes the important role that communities can play in shaping and improving outcomes, as well as the importance of community-based planning.

5. **Systems Approach**
   There are many programs and services that exist to help improve child and family outcomes. A systems approach recognizes that child and family well-being is a complex social issue that requires many different services working together to improve outcomes.

6. **Equity Approach**
   Disparities in child and family outcomes exist across the population. An equity approach attempts to both understand the root causes of those disparities, and to reduce inequities within the population.
Figure 1: This framework places child and family outcomes in a broader social context.

**FRAMEWORK**

**SHARED OUTCOMES**

**CHILD OUTCOMES**
1. Physical Health & Development
2. Mental Health & Social Development
3. Learning & Education
4. Rights & Opportunities
5. Nurture & Care

**FAMILY OUTCOMES**
6. Family Health
7. Resilience & Support
8. Lifelong Learning
9. Financial Security
10. Community & Culture

**SERVICE SYSTEM**
- Community Services
- Policies & Funding
- Advocacy
- Evaluation
- System Planning
- Community Planning

**COMMUNITY DETERMINANTS**
- Aboriginal Identity
- Food Insecurity
- Francophone Identity
- Immigration & Migration
- Social Exclusion
- Disability
- Gender
- Income & Income Distribution
- Social Safety Nets
- Early Childhood Development
- Health Services
- Physical Environments
- Social Support Networks
- Education & Literacy
- Housing
- Race, Language & Culture
- Stress, Bodies & Illness
- Employment & Job Insecurity
- Physical Environments
- Language
- Culture

Development along the life-course.
Shared Outcomes

At the heart of this framework are the child and family outcomes. They were developed through a collaborative, community-based process. When taken together, they define child and family well-being. In the next phase of this project, indicators will be selected in order to measure child and family outcomes in Toronto.

Five family and five child outcomes were developed. Figure 2 highlights two things: while child and family outcomes have been separated, they are intrinsically connected; it also highlights that outcomes develop and build on each other over one’s life-course from pre-birth through childhood and into adulthood.

Figure 2: Child and family outcomes are interrelated, and build over the life-course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD OUTCOMES</th>
<th>FAMILY OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Physical Health &amp; Development</td>
<td>6. Family Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mental Health &amp; Social</td>
<td>7. Resilience &amp; Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>8. Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rights &amp; Opportunities</td>
<td>10. Community &amp; Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Nurture &amp; Care</td>
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Development along the life-course.
## Child Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Child Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physical Health &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children are born healthy, and reach their optimal physical health and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mental Health &amp; Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children have the social, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being to reach their potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children are engaged and curious learners, gain knowledge and skills, and have educational success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rights &amp; Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s rights are fulfilled; they have opportunities for personal development and participate in decisions about their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nurture &amp; Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children have safe, nurturing and positive environments that encourage learning and development.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Family Outcomes

6 Family Health
Families experience optimal individual physical and mental health, and contribute to the growth and development of each family member.

7 Resilience & Support
Families are able to cope with challenges, and have consistent support through social networks and appropriate services.

8 Lifelong Learning
Families have equitable access to learning and training, and are active in their children’s education.

9 Material Well-being
Families have material well-being and an equitable standard of living.

10 Community & Culture
Families belong to communities, and have the freedom to express, and opportunities to foster, their culture and identity.
The service system refers to all the many public policies, services and programs that support children and their families (Figure 3). Many different stakeholders make up the service system, including all levels of government, and the non-profit and private sectors. The framework emphasizes the important role that the service system plays in improving outcomes for children and families. The following are some major components of that system.

- **Community Services** – There are many different kinds of services, ranging from child care to health care. They are offered by the public, private and non-profit sectors and can have a variety of funding sources.
- **Policies & Funding** – A policy is a planned course of action. Funding a service or program can be understood as a type of policy. Policies set the direction for the service system and set regulations for particular services.
- **Advocacy** – Advocacy refers to public support for a particular cause or policy change, which is promoted to policy-makers and politicians by an interest group.
- **Evaluation** – Evaluation involves using information to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of programs, services or policies in meeting their goals.
- **System Planning** – System planning involves co-ordination among stakeholders to change a system and solve identified problems.
- **Community Planning** – Community planning is when a community is involved in shaping the services that are used by that community.

Figure 3: The Service System includes all the many policies, services and programs that support children and their families.
Community Determinants

There are many structural factors that can affect child and family outcomes, most of which are beyond a person's individual control. At a community level, the 18 factors listed in Figure 4 often impact the outcomes of children and families. We call them the "community determinants." Although this list is not exhaustive, the determinants have been chosen to reflect the particular context of Toronto, as well as the feedback that was received through consultations.

These factors are rooted in the social determinants of health, which describe the ways in which health is determined by complex interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behavior. They have been adapted from two reports on the social determinants of health:

- *What Determines Health?* by the Public Health Agency of Canada (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/determinants/).

**Figure 4:** 18 Community Determinants depict the complex ways that broader social, economic and environmental factors impact child and family outcomes.
**Glossary of Terms**

**Child** – The Toronto Child & Family Network defines childhood as 0-12 years of age, inclusive.

**Community Determinants** – Based on the social determinants of health, community determinants are social, economic and environmental factors that affect child and family well-being. They are structural factors that are often beyond the control of individuals, and are measured at the community or population level (not the individual level). They will be used to understand vulnerability and inequity in child and family outcomes.

**Family** – The Network defines family broadly to include all arrangements and cultural definitions. This can include parents, children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, foster parents, or other caregivers and guardians.

**Indicator** – A measure, often expressed in the form of statistical data, which captures one or several key dimensions of an outcome.

**Life-course** – A culturally defined sequence of age categories that people are typically expected to pass through as they progress from birth to death. For our purposes, these stages generally include pre-birth, birth, early childhood (0-5 years), middle childhood (6-12), youth (13-18) and adulthood (19+).

**Outcome** – A desired change or improvement. We focus on improving the well-being of children and their families.

- **Population Outcome** – these are high level outcomes that can be monitored in order to assess the well-being of the entire population, or large groups within the population. It is difficult to show a causal link between any specific service intervention and population outcomes. Rather they emphasize the cumulative impact of many social and economic factors over time on the well-being of the population.
- **Program Outcome** – these outcomes describe a cause-and-effect relationship between the activities of a specific program or service, and changes in the lives of those who have participated in those programs.

**Rights of Children** – Our conception of children’s rights is based on the Toronto Children's Charter. For more information, please visit [www.toronto.ca/children/agenda](http://www.toronto.ca/children/agenda)

**Service System** – The service system includes all the many policies, services and programs that support families and their children, such as family support programs, early learning and care, and special needs services. It also includes other service sectors such as primary health care, public health, transportation, housing, parks and recreation, employment services, and other social and community services, as well as all the policies and legislation that regulate and fund them.