



"BELIEVING IN POTENTIAL"

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## **REPORT TO THE CITY OF DELTA**

REACH Child and Youth Development Society is a non-profit, community-based organization. We offer a variety of programs designed to support families and help children and youth achieve their optimal development.

The REACH Early Intervention (EI) Therapies Program is a family-centered service that offers speech-language therapy (SLP), occupational therapy (OT) and physiotherapy (PT) to children up to kindergarten entry. Children participate in individual or group therapy sessions that focus on developing their communication, motor and/or daily living skills. Families gain knowledge about their child's development and learn how to teach their child in daily activities.

### **REACH EARLY INTERVENTION (EI) THERAPIES PROGRAM**

#### **(i) Summary of actions and achievements for 2023**

The REACH Early Intervention Therapies program had the following goals and outcomes in 2023:

##### **1. Providing effective individualized therapy services.**

All children in the REACH EI Therapies program have individualized intervention plans. The plan is developed by the family and the child's team, and the plan has goals with measurable outcomes in priority areas. Children participate in either 1-1 or group intervention and families receive education as to how to encourage their child's development in the goal areas at home.

Children are eligible for SLP, OT and PT services until they enter Kindergarten. A transition plan is developed for each child who enters Kindergarten in September.

##### Transition to Kindergarten – 2023:

In accordance with our commitment to providing comprehensive and seamless services, REACH continued its successful transition plan for clients entering kindergarten in September 2023. This initiative ensures a smooth handover of services from our Early Intervention program to the educational realm, facilitating a collaborative approach between REACH and the Delta School District.

### Transition Statistics:

In the year 2023, a total of 49 individual clients were successfully discharged from REACH EI Therapies program as they prepared to embark on their educational journeys in kindergarten. Some of these children attended for more than one therapy service. Among them, 31 clients were discharged from Occupational Therapy (OT) services, 14 clients from Physical Therapy (PT) services, and 35 clients were discharged from Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) services.

### Collaboration with Delta School District:

Our therapists diligently adhered to the guidelines set forth by the Delta School District during the transition process. Recognizing the dynamic nature of educational plans, therapists communicated extensively with school district personnel, providing invaluable insights into each child's development, intervention priorities, and effective therapeutic strategies. This collaborative exchange ensures that the transition plan aligns seamlessly with the child's unique needs and sets the stage for a positive and supportive learning experience within the school setting.

The successful transition of 49 clients entering kindergarten in 2023 exemplifies the efficacy of our collaborative approach with the Delta School District. REACH remains steadfast in its commitment to providing high-quality services that seamlessly integrate with the evolving needs of our clients, ensuring a positive and supportive start to their educational journey. We appreciate the ongoing support of the City of Delta in enabling us to carry out this essential work for the growth of our community's children.

## **2. Drop-Ins to Delta families**

Drop-in services provide parents with an opportunity to ask SLPs, OTs and PTs for information about their child's development. The program also raises awareness of the services available to children in Delta, and also ensures that children with special needs are identified early.

In response to shifting community dynamics, the Infant Development Playgroups (IDP) were successfully conducted in South Delta during 2023. However, it is noteworthy that attendance in North Delta experienced a reduction, prompting a strategic evaluation of our outreach efforts in that region.

REACH is actively working on enhancing awareness among North Delta families about the availability and benefits of our playgroups. Our aim is to ensure that families across Delta are well-informed and feel encouraged to participate in these valuable programs.

One significant factor influencing awareness in North Delta is the recent and substantial increase in the South Asian community, where language barriers may impede effective communication. REACH is actively working on enhancing awareness among North Delta families, particularly those facing language barriers. Our Punjabi-speaking IDP professionals are playing a crucial role in breaking down these language barriers,

ensuring that all families have access to information about the availability and benefits of our playgroups.

While attendance in North Delta playgroups reduced, our dedicated therapists continued to engage with the community. Therapists participated in South Delta playgroups from time to time, fostering a continued connection with parents and addressing any questions or concerns regarding their child's development.

### **3. Increasing the number of families served**

In the preceding year, 2022, the number of children awaiting EI Therapies remained a pressing concern. The waitlist for Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) services saw a significant increase of 30%, with an average of 129 children on the waitlist each month.

This year, the number of children on the waitlist for EI Therapies has maintained a steady presence. On average each month in 2023, there were 74 children on the waitlist for SLP, 49 children on the waitlist for OT, and 10 children on the waitlist for PT. This equates to an overall average of 133 children awaiting EI Therapy services each month.

#### **(a) Group Services:**

Families on the waitlist were provided with consultation services while they waited for more intensive therapy involvement from speech and occupational therapy. Some of these families were also offered participation in a group. Groups have the benefit of providing services to multiple children at the same time. These services also allow families to build support networks and share ideas with one another. During 2023, EI therapies were able to offer a variety of in-person and online groups.

Occupational Therapists conducted:

- Toileting groups to support and educate parents whose goal is to toilet train their child with special needs.
- Fine motor groups to help prepare children with motor delays for kindergarten entry.
- Picky eating groups to help support families whose children have a very restricted diet.

Speech Therapists conducted:

- Early communication parent group for families on the SLP waitlist to teach parents strategies to develop their child's communication skills in daily activities.

#### **(b) Adapted gymnastics group:**

REACH continued its collaboration with Delta Gymnastics for adapted gymnastics groups. REACH provided \$20,000 in fundraised dollars so parents wouldn't have to pay a registration fee and to help keep program operating this year. This initiative has been further enriched through a partnership with the Delta School District that has provided transportation to Delta Gymnastics in Ladner and allowing the use of the participating children's EA's.

### Adaptive swim program

REACH is actively seeking community support to expand our capacity-building efforts, particularly for our complex children who face limited opportunities to participate in community activities. We are excited about the prospect of developing an adaptive swim program, recognizing the significant benefits it could bring to the well-being and development of the children we serve.

### (c) Therapy Blocks:

Building upon the positive outcomes observed in 2022, the Occupational Therapists at REACH continued the effective approach of providing therapy in blocks throughout this year. This model, initiated in the previous year, involved children attending direct therapy sessions with their parents, receiving coaching on effective strategies. Following the sessions, parents were empowered to continue implementing these strategies in the priority goal areas at home while awaiting the next block of intervention.

In a progressive development this year, the Speech-Language Pathologists at REACH have also adopted the therapy blocks model. This expansion allows for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to service delivery, aligning with the successful framework established by the OTs.

The continued implementation of therapy blocks in both OT and SLP services serves multiple purposes. It not only maximizes the impact of direct therapy sessions but also empowers parents with valuable coaching, fostering a collaborative environment between professionals and families. This approach ensures that parents are actively involved in their child's development, extending the impact of therapeutic interventions beyond the center into the home environment.

Preliminary feedback indicates positive outcomes from both parents and therapists regarding the efficacy of therapy blocks. Parents appreciate the enhanced engagement and learning opportunities, while therapists note increased continuity in addressing specific goal areas over consecutive sessions.

### (d) Telepractice:

Where appropriate, occupational therapists have used phone and virtual consultations. This has made the appointments more frequent and convenient to families and more cost effective for the program because they eliminate travel time.

Speech therapists have also used virtual consultations when appropriate, including online groups for parent education and goal setting.

### **4. Prioritizing Feeding and Swallowing referrals:**

The program continued to use "Needs Based Prioritization Tool" for feeding and swallowing concerns, where children with more severe difficulties that also give rise to safety concerns, are given higher priority. Families are offered appropriate and timely services from an OT and SLP.

**(ii) Stats (2023)**

The year, 2023, witnessed a sustained increase in the overall rate of referrals to our programs where the total number of referrals for OT, SLP and/or PT remained robust at 241.

The therapies program served a total of 203 children in 2023. Some children received services from more than one therapy (e.g., SLP and OT). The SLP program served 144 children, the OT program 90, and the PT program 78.

In Delta for each month of 2023, there were an average of 74 children on the waitlist for SLP, 49 children on the waitlist for OT, and 10 children on the waitlist for PT. This is an overall average of 133 children awaiting EI Therapy each month.

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Children Served 2018</b>	<b>Children Served 2019</b>	<b>Children Served 2020</b>	<b>Children Served 2021</b>	<b>Children Served 2022</b>	<b>Children Served 2023</b>
<b>SLP</b>	98	143	134	116	146	144
<b>OT</b>	75	95	95	90	135	90
<b>PT</b>	39	58	60	61	75	78
<b>Totals</b>	212	296	289	267	230	203

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Average Number on Waitlist 2018</b>	<b>Average Number on Waitlist 2019</b>	<b>Average Number on Waitlist 2020</b>	<b>Average Number on Waitlist 2021</b>	<b>Average Number on Waitlist 2022</b>	<b>Average Number on Waitlist 2023</b>
<b>SLP</b>	27	62	46	54	70	74
<b>OT</b>	24	38	36	50	52	49
<b>PT</b>	12	5	3	7	7	10
<b>Totals</b>	63	105	85	111	129	133

**Location of operation**

SLPs, OTs and PTs provided services in the Lois E Jackson Kinsmen Centre for Children in Ladner, the Play and Learn Centre in the North Delta Rec Centre, North Delta House, in family homes, daycares, and preschools in Tsawwassen, Ladner and North Delta.

### **Aggregate hours dedicated to the provision of service in 2023**

Based on a 35-hour work week, the full-time employee equivalents (FTEs) for the EI Therapies program from January to October was 4.43. Starting in November 2023, MCFD increased the SLP allocation by 1 FTE and the therapy assistant allocation by 0.8 FTE. The total FTE by the end of December 2023 is 6.23.

The 6.23 FTEs are funded in the following way:

- 4.98 FTEs by the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- 1.25 FTEs is a combination of funding from the City of Delta, the Community Gaming Grant, and the Gift of Speech

The 1.25 FTEs are allocated as follows: 0.4 to SLP, 0.35 to OT, and 0.50 to PT

### **(iii) Emerging Issues and Ongoing Challenges**

#### Recruitment and Retention in 2023: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Changes

As we delve into the challenges and triumphs of recruitment and retention in 2023, it is imperative to acknowledge the evolving landscape of our organization. The past year has brought both hurdles and significant strides in addressing the pressing issues of staffing in our agency, particularly within the context of therapies.

#### Challenges Faced:

The year passed with a notable obstacle as REACH encountered a temporary shortage of Occupational Therapists from July 28th to November 30th, 2023. REACH had only 0.45 FTE hired OT during this period.

This period emphasized the prevailing scarcity of professionals in our province and illuminated the ongoing challenges in securing specialized staff for our crucial services. Despite these difficulties, REACH remained steadfast in its commitment to providing uninterrupted support to our clients.

#### Financial Impacts:

The adjustments in funding and compensation across the sector, especially within unionized agencies, have had reverberations on our recruitment and retention strategies. The Municipal Pension Plan, introduced for REACH staff starting October 1, 2022, has been a significant positive development, aligning our pension benefits with industry standards. However, the impending unionization of REACH in 2024 poses new considerations, given the anticipated wage increases in collective agreements for therapists in unionized agencies.

#### Positive Developments:

On a positive note, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) recognized the critical role REACH plays in the community by increasing our contract from 3.18 to

4.98 FTEs (including 1 FTE for therapy assistants). This expanded contract demonstrates a commitment to our mission and acknowledges the growing demands for our services. It is an encouraging step forward in our pursuit of sustaining and enhancing service levels for those we serve.

Looking Ahead:

As REACH prepares for unionization in 2024, we anticipate further changes in our workforce dynamics. The commitment to fair and competitive compensation for our staff remains a top priority, and we continue to seek the support of our funding partners, including the City of Delta.

In conclusion, the year 2023 has been a testament to our resilience in the face of challenges and a testament to the positive impact we continue to be able to achieve. As we forge ahead, we look forward to working hand in hand with the City of Delta to address the ongoing challenges of recruitment and retention, ensuring the continued provision of exceptional services to our community.

**a) Copy of Financial Statements**

See enclosed Annual Report with audited Financial Statements included.

**b) A plan of service for the next calendar year**

REACH Child and Youth Development Society will continue to provide speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services to children in the community of Delta up to kindergarten entry. These services include assessments, individual program planning and intervention, parent support and education and coordination with other service providers. REACH will also continue to strive to find creative ways to manage waitlists and provide services to as many families as possible given our resources.

**c) Include such other information as Delta may reasonably require.**

- The City of Delta's grant of \$50,274 enables REACH Child and Youth Development Society to attract a further \$80,000 annual funding (2022/2023 fiscal) to the community for therapy services from the Gaming Commission.

REACH Child and Youth Development Society welcomes any feedback and input from the City of Delta as to their priorities and services for children with special needs. We are most appreciative of your support for these vulnerable children.