



# Gratitude Report

2020



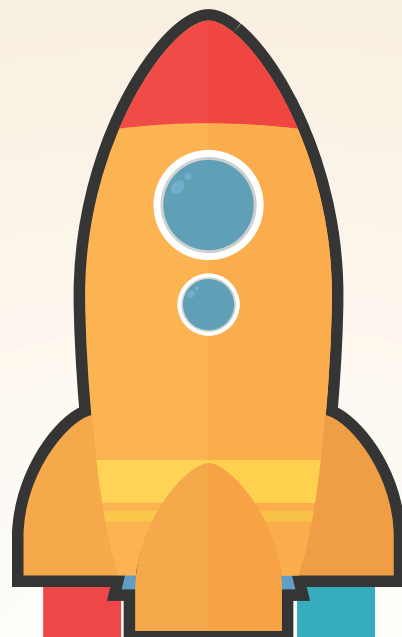


# Ottawa Child & Youth Initiative *Growing Up Great*

The Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative (OCYI) is a collaborative of over 80 community organizations and agencies with a shared commitment to promote the healthy development of children and youth.

## Vision

Ensuring all children and youth in Ottawa can reach their full potential and grow up great!



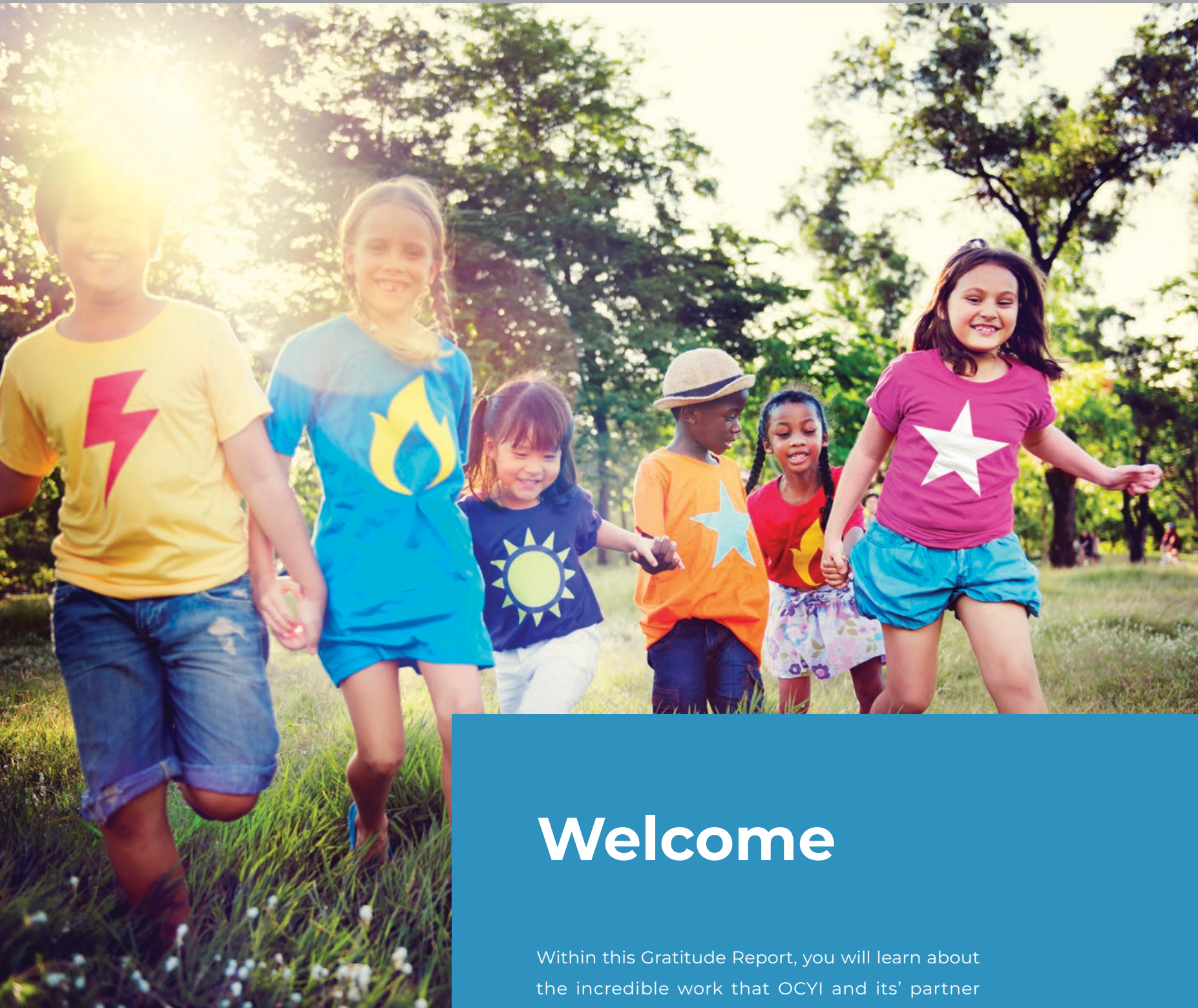
## Mission

Recognizing the power of collective advocacy and collaborative community efforts and planning, OCYI provides a platform for Groups to work together to guide and influence practices, systems and public policy, aimed at nourishing the positive, healthy growth of children and youth in our community.

## Values

- ⚙️ Collaboration to maximize impact
- ⚙️ Incorporating and advancing Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- ⚙️ The fundamental rights of all children and youth as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ⚙️ Joint planning and evidenced-based decision-making
- ⚙️ Strategic development and resource pooling





# Welcome

Within this Gratitude Report, you will learn about the incredible work that OCYI and its’ partner organizations have been involved in over the past year. Through the numerous challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are so grateful to all the frontline staff, partners, and funders for their incredible work to help support children and youth from communities all across the city.

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# Message from OCYI Steering Committee Co-Chairs

As Co-Chairs of the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative (OCYI) Steering Committee, we are pleased to support the OCYI 2020-2021 Annual Report.

From both of our respective fields, we have an inherent understanding of needs, challenges and risks faced by the youth in Ottawa. The OCYI plays a critical role in creating a safe environment for us to come together as a community to look at systemic issues being experienced and play a collaborative role in the development of program delivery to support better youth outcomes in our communities.

As we look back on 2020, we reflect on the unprecedented challenges felt not only on a global level but also strongly within our community – especially by children and youth.



The pandemic has led to a re-organization of everyday life, we are increasingly learning to pivot as we face uncertainties around the COVID -19 virus.

Families have had to cope with additional stressors and to balance multiple roles simultaneously as they try to navigate working from home while trying to support the needs of children who have shifted to online, virtual learning.

We know that for many youth living at home, family dynamics have been a significant stressor, and online/modified school schedules have significantly interrupted routines and motivation. It is also important to note that for some youth, the school environment is their safe place and through the pandemic these children have been placed increasingly more at risk.

On all levels, barriers have been felt in trying to access healthier coping strategies (connecting with others, going to the gym, attending meetings/ groups, sports and extracurricular activities) due to restrictions. As a result, changes in behaviours and appearance that would have otherwise be seen as early signs of mental illness, problematic substance use or decreased overall wellbeing have gone unnoticed. These barriers have posed significant risks for LGBTQ2S+ youth, racialized youth, and youth experiencing homelessness or who come from economically disadvantaged families.

As we begin to look forward to the recovery phase post pandemic, we have an opportunity to change the trajectory of the negative impacts that have affected the children and youth in our community. Now more than ever, the work and dedication of OCYI members will be critical. We must be vigilant in gaining a thorough understanding of the impact of the pandemic on children, youth and their families in Ottawa and channelling that into the development of needs based programming. As we continue to evaluate the systems of care that are available to children and youth we will continue with strong advocacy to bring their health care needs to the forefront of conversation.

We are proud to serve this community in our Co-Chair roles and look forward to continuing our commitment to supporting the children, youth and families in Ottawa.



Johanne Levesque

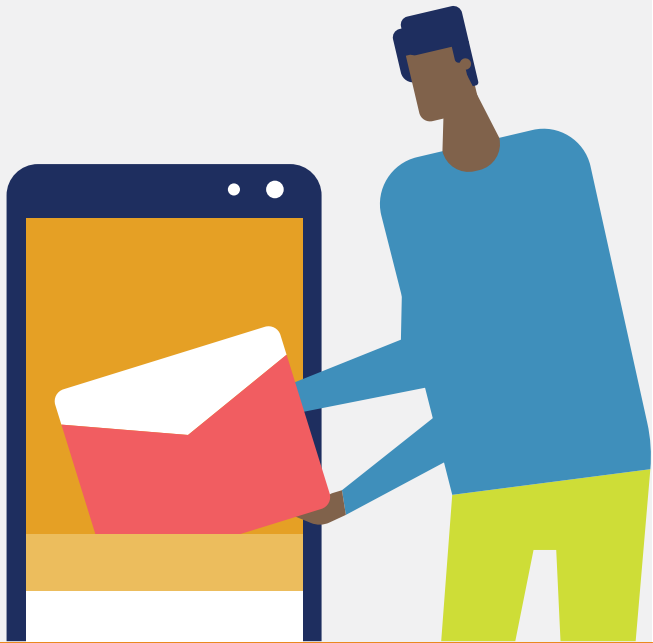


Deputy Chief Steve Bell

It has been my extreme pleasure to have served as Co-chair of the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative for the past two years. I have been fortunate in my career to have been part of several collaborative tables. They have all undertaken and accomplished great work. I cannot express enough; however, how impressed I have been, and continue to be, with the passion, commitment and ingenuity of the many leaders found around the OCYI table. As a career educator and as a parent, I am truly grateful for the work of the OCYI and I am looking forward to continuing to support its vision for our children and youth as a member of the committee.



**Brett Reynolds**  
OCYI Steering Committee  
Outgoing Co-chair



# Background

## The **5 W's** of OCYI (OH! and one **H**)

### What

The Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative (or OCYI) is a collaborative of over 80 community organizations and agencies supporting children and youth to reach their full potential and grow up great!

### How

Recognizing the power of collective advocacy and collaborative community efforts and planning, OCYI provides a platform for groups to work together and enable the wellbeing of children and youth in Ottawa. OCYI also strives to guide and influence practices, policies, and systems aimed at the healthy development for all children and youth.

A common approach defines how OCYI operates. On an annual basis, the OCYI Steering Committee and the various OCYI Task Groups will review the goals of the OCYI and develop action plans that define the collective work to be achieved. These activities may be resourced by the Initiative or build on activities being led by a member agency. The outcomes of the action plans will be monitored regularly and evaluated annually.

The OCYI utilizes consensus decision making and is based on the goals of the OCYI and the active participation of the membership. Consensus decision making is a dynamic way of finding solutions and reaching agreement that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with. This method includes dialogue to clarify issues, open discussion, exploration of ideas, proposal and amendments of solutions or decisions, and checking for agreement.



### Who/When/Where

The OCYI encompasses all of Ottawa and is made up of a Project Coordinator, Communications Specialist, a Steering Committee and various Task Groups.

The OCYI Steering Committee as well as each of the OCYI Task Groups meet regularly to ensure alignment of objectives, monitor progress, approve changes related to scope or budgets, and consult on all important decisions. Each year OCYI will report to the community and funders on its impact and outcomes.

### Why

Together we can direct attention toward child and youth challenges, gaps and needs and collectively improve the wellbeing of ALL children and youth in Ottawa. The benefits of being a member of Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative include:

- Access to networking events on systems-level issues impacting children and youth
- Resources and professional development workshops for managers and front-line staff
- Opportunities to shape practice, policy, systems, research and common evaluation
- A stronger, unified voice for the Ottawa child and youth sector



# Our Structure

The OCYI is made up of key players with representation from children and family services and sectors, who all agree to share responsibility, resources, and accountability.

The Initiative strives to achieve shared goals that no single entity can accomplish on its own, including in policy, system and, practice changes.

## The OCYI is comprised of:

### Steering Committee:

The Committee acts as the executive of the Initiative. It is responsible for ensuring that there are strong linkages, communication and integration of work across the full Initiative.

The Steering Committee is comprised of approximately 20 members (maximum) including but not limited to senior executive leaders from the public, private and non-profit sectors.

The Steering Committee will provide leadership, strategic direction and oversight of OCYI deliverables as well as review the funding model of OCYI. The Committee is responsible for using their experiences, skills and knowledge of child and youth development to steer the work being undertaken by OCYI and its Task Groups.

### Roles and Responsibilities:

- Linking, integrating and communicating across the Initiative
- Adopting strategic goals and directions that align with the Vision and Mission of OCYI
- Planning and facilitating meetings and events of the OCYI network, as appropriate;
- Identify and develop strategies for securing resources to support the Initiative and its activities; Leverage investment of the Ottawa community to support children and youth reaching their full potential; and
- Reporting progress to the community towards achieving identified goals.

### The OCYI Coordinator

The role of the Coordinator is to perform secretariat duties including securing approval of deliverables from the OCYI Steering Committee as well as organize and manage OCYI activities. The Coordinator also coordinates meetings, resources and information.

### OCYI Communications Specialist

The Communication Specialist is responsible for creating communications content on behalf of OCYI. Including but not limited to reports, press releases, social media posts and website content.



### OCYI Membership:

Membership to the OCYI Network is open to all those that agree with our mandate and strategic priorities. Members are individuals and representatives from community organizations and networks who work with children, youth and their families and share the vision, mission and values of the OCYI.

### Roles and Responsibilities:

- Foster community collaboration;
- Advocate for children and youth in the community and at all levels of government;
- Represent the interests of children and youth to achieve its goals in circles of influence in the community;
- Create linkages and connections between related activities to benefit children and youth in Ottawa; and
- Support and assist with the work of other committees as needed and appropriate.

### Task Groups:

- 1. Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Education and Awareness Task Group** The IECMH Education and Awareness Task Group was developed to raise awareness about the importance of and to promote and protect infant and early childhood mental health.
- 2. Early Childhood Development Task Group** The Early Childhood Development Task Group aims to support all young children (0-6 yrs) and their families through a collective community approach.
- 3. Critical Hours Task Group** The Critical Hours Task Group aspires to support critical hours programs and homework clubs to foster academic, social and emotional outcomes for children and youth.
- 4. Ottawa Collaborative for Parenting Support Task Group** The Ottawa Collaborative for Parenting Support Task Group is a community of partners working together to build resilient families that can support their children's healthy development, feel empowered, and are able to cope with the ups and downs of everyday living.

- 5. Research & Evaluation Task Group** The Research and Evaluation Task Group supports the work of the OCYI and its sub-committees, and ensure appropriate methods are used for quality research, evaluation and surveillance.

### Roles and Responsibilities of Task Group members:

- Identify priorities, define strategies, make recommendations and implement initiatives;
- Develop action plans and monitor outcomes;
- Engage and mobilize representatives with a vested interest in children and youth to develop and implement community plans;
- Link with relevant community initiatives and networks;
- Provide input to and support for communications and research plans; and
- Represent OCYI at public/community events and meetings.

# Meet OCYI's Five Incredible Task Groups



## 1. Critical Hours Task Group

Focusing on the Critical Hours, the task group brings together service agencies from across Ottawa to promote best practice programming and training. The Critical Hours Task Group continued to meet throughout the pandemic offering support and guidance in pivoting to virtual programming, staying connected with the community and policies and procedures regarding re-opening with COVID-19 practices.

The enjoy winter kits initiative is one of recent ways where the Task Group supported the Ottawa community by supplying winter clothing and equipment to families. This Task Group is incredibly important as it promotes collaborative efforts to standardize high quality critical hours programming. The Task Group looks forward to continuing supporting one another, as we move through this pandemic and to helping families and children and youth cope from its' impacts.

## 2. Early Childhood Development Task Group

Our focus for this year was the Transition to Kindergarten project. The goal of this pilot project is to establish a standard form to share information about students in order to facilitate the transition from Early Learning Centres (ELC) to school environments, with a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) lens. With the support of

students from the Bachelor of Early Learning and Early Childhood Development at Algonquin College, we finalized the Creating Connections Transition form. A package was developed that will be piloted with 3 school boards and a few of their local child care centres later in 2021. A facilitation guide was developed in order to support the Early Learning Environments and the Kindergarten Teams. We are excited about our pilot project this fall and look forward to the results and possible expansion of this project.

## 3. Ottawa Collaborative for Parenting Support Task Group

During the past year the OCPS task group has focused on continuing to spread the word through the Just Ask Campaign that was developed a few years ago. Members of this committee have been guests on OPH's Parenting in Ottawa Facebook page to cover a variety of topics such as, licensed home childcare, transitioning to school, programs and services offered by EarlyON centres, parenting resources from Parent Resource Centre and services offered by 211.

This task group is committed to continued support to the Parent Engagement Tool entitled, Building Agency Capacity to Improve Parent Engagement Practices in Ottawa. The Task Group reviewed the resource and developed an additional tool to support agencies during COVID-19. All resources are available on the OCYI

website, and this tool will be translated into French for francophone communities. In the future, we would like to have this tool translated to French and to support agencies in utilizing the tool further.

## 4. The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative and Task Group

The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative and Task Group brings together service providers from across sectors interested in building a system of care for infant and early childhood mental health awareness and outcomes.

Through collective impact in the greater Ottawa community, our group was developed to help raise awareness about the importance of and to promote and protect the developing capacity of children from birth to six years. Our focus is on their ability to form close and secure adult and peer relationships, experience, manage, and express a full range of emotions, and explore and learn in their environment. This is all taken into consideration within the context of family, community, and culture.

The work of this initiative continues to evolve and change as we grow the system of care for infants, young children, and their families in Ottawa. Some of our initiatives have included:

- Participation in the annual Bell Let's Talk campaign
- Creation of the Practice Change Champions - a diverse group of professionals who exchange knowledge, best practices, and training specifically geared at supporting the understanding of children's mental health, resiliency, and self-regulation skills
- Development of useful parent and professional tip sheets that speak to the six main aspects of infant and early childhood mental health (brain development, attachment, resiliency, self-agency, temperament, and self-regulation).

We fully appreciate the ability to collaborate with the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative and its partners. We know that this work cannot be done alone and know that we are better together.

## 5. Research and Evaluation Task Group

The Research and Evaluation Task Force is dedicated to supporting the Ottawa Child Youth Initiative (OCYI) to achieve its goals through a collective impact approach. The role of the task force is to support the design and implementation of a shared measurement system; to gather and analyze data; to identify lessons learned; and to contribute information and research recommendations to support the Steering Committee to make evidence-based decisions.

We are comprised of individuals skilled in research, evaluation and data analytics who represent local partners working to make kids grow up great. Our partners include local school boards, academic institutions, grant based organizations, research foundations, non-profits, health care services, CHEO and the City of Ottawa.

**The Task Force has committed to four actions:**

1. Support the OCYI's Evaluation Framework
2. Advise on OCYI research initiatives
3. Monitor data and identify research gaps in fostering the healthy development of all children and youth in the Ottawa region.
4. Establish a data management system

**Together, we can make our  
community measurably better.**



# Our Strategic Priorities

OCYI is grounded in the Framework to Promote the Healthy Development of Children and Youth, which illustrates that families, schools, neighbourhoods, community and governments all have a role to play in enabling children and youth to achieve their optimal development.

In 2019, OCYI's Steering Committee adopted a strategic plan focused on social-emotional health and well-being.





# Putting OCYI Strategic Priorities into Action

1

## Awareness

OCYI's first Strategic Priority is Awareness. This priority aims to increase awareness among stakeholders of the importance of social-emotional learning and well-being on the healthy development outcomes of children and youth.

To support the Awareness strategic priority, we would like to showcase the following events and initiatives where OCYI worked to create awareness among our stakeholders.

## Boosting OCYI Communications

- OCYI's **Twitter** account was rebranded to **OCYI\_Ottawa** in October 2020 and has since welcomed **377 new followers** as of October 2020. (840 → 1,217)
- In January 2021, OCYI established a brand **new Instagram account ocyi\_ottawa** with **248 followers**. This platform has already proven to be a valuable place to share, connect and grow OCYI's reach.
- Communications efforts have expanded to supporting the initiatives of our partners. A recent example of this was the production of **social media content** for the IECMH task group to use on **Bell Let's Talk Day**.
- In December, OCYI produced and circulated its **inaugural newsletter, The OCYI Ovation**, followed by two issues of the new **OCYI Bulletin IEJO**.
- Reaffirming our commitment to supporting all of our partners, OCYI has worked to **share news, events and initiatives** using OCYI social media platforms and publications.
- In an effort to better understand how we can best bolster the work of our partners, OCYI recently created and dispersed a comprehensive **communications survey**.
- **OCYI's member list**, of over 100 organizations, has now been updated through personal contact with each group, to ensure that **all information is current and correct**.



"Just Ask Children's Village about licensed home child care!"

## Just Ask Series

Recognizing that the early years are crucial to a child's ability to 'grow up great' and reach their full potential, OCYI has updated its Just Ask Campaign and has created an OCYI Just Ask Facebook series through OCYI's Ottawa Collaborative for Parenting Support and in partnership with Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) Parenting in Ottawa (PIO) Facebook page.

Leveraging the Parenting in Ottawa Facebook page, which currently has 20,000 followers, gives parents and caregivers an opportunity to Just Ask guest experts their questions during a time when many in-person services have changed, been cancelled, or closed due to COVID-19. Guest experts consist of representatives from OCYI partner agencies and networks. The impact and success of this monthly event has OCYI looking forward to planning and organizing another full roster of Just Ask events for 2021-2022.

"Just Ask a Nurse from OPH!"

"Just Ask about Eastern Ontario's 211 Service!"

So far there have been **6 Just Ask days** completed, and more coming up!

we've reached  
**53, 897**  
people with this series

"Just Ask the French Catholic School Board about the transition to kindergarten!"

"Just Ask Andrew Fleck and Grandir Ensemble about EarlyONs!"

"Just Ask the Parent Resource Centre!"



**300 Registrants!**

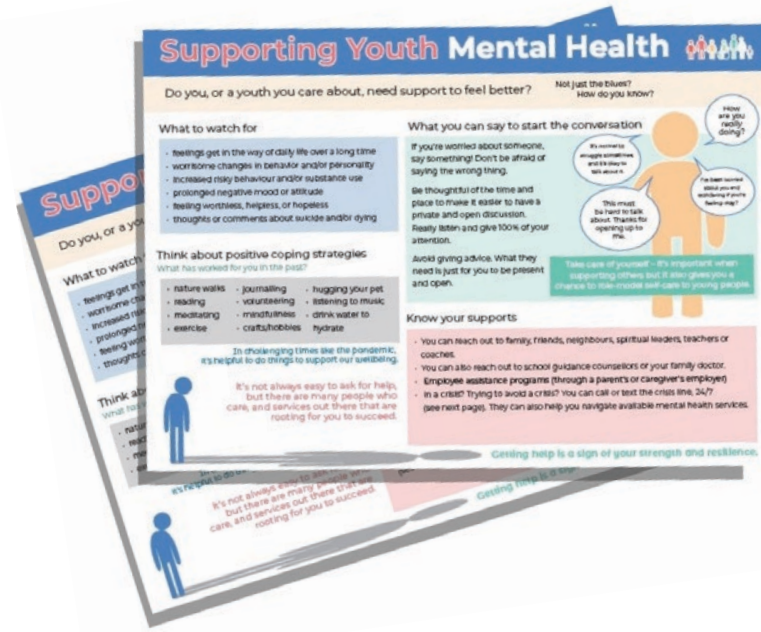
## Ask The Experts: Youth Mental Health & Addictions Virtual Town Hall



On February 11, 2021, the Kids Come First Health Team and partners: OCYI, Ottawa Public Health, Suicide Prevention Ottawa and Crime Prevention Ottawa, hosted a virtual Mental Health and Addictions town hall with partner panelists from Ottawa Public Health, Rideauwood Addictions and Family Services, PLEO-Parents' Lifeline, Centre Le Cap, Youth Net/Reseau Ado, Valoris, The Ottawa Black Mental Health Coalition, and CHEO/Youth Services Bureau.

The goal of this event was to provide caregivers and parents, and youth with the opportunity to ask experts their mental health and addictions related questions and to learn about resources within the community; including the newly launched "Know What to Do Guide". The town hall attracted over 300 registrants and was hosted using simultaneous translation and available in English and French. Recordings are posted on the **OCYI website** and the **Kids Come First Health Team website**.





# Know What to Do Guide

The “Know What to Do Guide” is aimed at increasing awareness of, and navigation to, available mental health supports and resources for children and youth. The guide was created by the Kids Come First Health Team in collaboration with partners OCYI, Ottawa Public Health and Suicide Prevention Ottawa.



# UNICEF Canada Child and Youth Well-being Survey

## Your Minute in a Pandemic Video Campaign

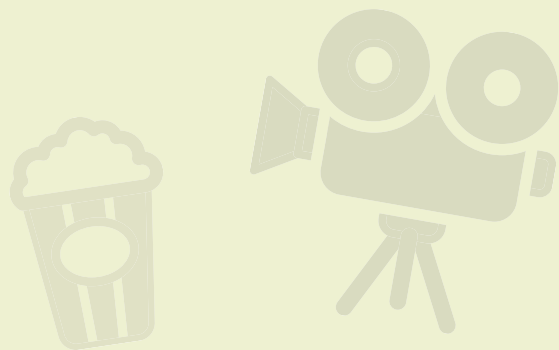
Youth, ages 14 to 18, are being asked to share messages of hope and resiliency with their peers, through the creation of a one minute video, as part of the peer to peer video campaign Your Minute in a Pandemic.

This campaign is part of a comprehensive strategy to inspire others and normalize mental health and addictions experiences by sharing stories and coping strategies, while fostering hope and resilience.

The purpose of the campaign is also to provide youth with a platform by which to:

- Increase their knowledge on issues related to substance use and mental health
- Engage youth to adapt and disseminate mental health and substance use prevention messaging to their peers

Initiated in March of 2021, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) in partnership with OCYI, the Kids Come First Health Team and CHEO's YouthNet/ReseauAdo (YNRA) has reached out to a number of local youth groups, and the mental health leads at the local school boards, to ask for their participation. Together we look forward to the launch of this campaign, in spring 2021, and viewing many heartfelt messages from Ottawa's youth.



Too often, decisions about children and youth are made without their involvement. OCYI has partnered with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) at the University of Waterloo, UNICEF Canada, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for a new exciting project, implemented in early spring of 2021.

Together with our partners, OCYI has invited children and youth who are 9 to 18 years old to fill out the UNICEF Canada Child and Youth Well-being Survey in either English or French to tell us how they are really doing.

Survey questions range from measuring participation in activities outside of school to asking children and

youth how they feel about school, their teachers, their sense of belonging to the community and overall satisfaction with life in general. Basic demographic information, like age, current location in the Eastern Ontario Region, and whether a participant is born in Canada are also included.

Responses to the survey will be combined to create a summary report, which will give us a “big picture” of the experiences of youth in the Eastern Ontario Region. This report will be made available to children and youth, and OCYI partners, through the OCYI website. We hope that our community can use the information in the report to make our communities better places for children and youth.







2

## Access

OCYI's second strategic priority is Access which is to support the mandate that all neighbourhoods should have access to a coordinated system of social emotional supports.

Over the course of 2020-21, OCYI engaged in numerous initiatives to enhance access to social-emotional supports throughout various communities.

## Enjoy Winter Kits

Warm hearts fought the cold through project 'Enjoy Winter Kits'. With sincere thanks to the United Way of East Ontario, for funding this initiative, OCYI in partnership with the Ottawa Community Housing Foundation, and staff from 17 organizations across Ottawa, were able to secure funds and staff from 17 organizations across the city of Ottawa were able to distribute items to help keep families warm, active and Covid-wise this winter.

*"I was honoured to have the opportunity to be a part of this initiative. It was an amazing way to support and connect with the families we work with, especially during these trying times!"*

**Emily - Staff Member at Centretown CHC**

*"It's been a pleasure taking part of the Winter Kits project with the Carling Family Shelter. The youth and their parents were extremely happy to receive hockey skates, helmets, toboggans, mittens, toques as well as hand warmers. It was great knowing how much it meant to them and that these families had the opportunity to experience skating for their very first time together. Many of the families were never able to participate in any winter activities because they were unable to afford the equipment. As I watched the youth pick up the kits from the playroom, I could see in their eyes how excited and thankful they all were. It was an honour to participate in the Enjoy Winter Kits project, and I would absolutely love to take part in this great initiative in the future."*

**Krystal – Staff Member at PQCHC**

- 19 organizations working together
- 17 organizations participated to create kits
- Goal was to provide 440 individuals with winter recreational gear, clothing and messaging about to how to stay safe and warm in winter
- In 72 hours, 20 organizations requested enough items for 1250 winter kits (the need was huge)
- Enthusiasm for this project = immeasurable

*"Hello, I would like to thank you and all your team for the precious gifts of winter coats that you gave to my children. It helped us a lot during the winter for school and other outings and it made me very happy to see that my community also thinks of us. May God bless you abundantly. Thank you from Mary."*

**Enjoy Winter Kits Recipient - CRC Rideau-Rockcliffe CRC**

*"Hi Kellie, If it is okay with you, I thought that if I got skates too maybe my son would be more encouraged. It's worth a try. I haven't skated in years so it should be fun and funny! I just don't like the cold so warm socks are a must. Thanks again for all of this help. We will have memories forever from this. Signed, the 41-year-old getting on skates after 25 years!"*

**Anonymous Enjoy Winter Kits Recipient – Crossroads Children's Mental Health Centre**





# Dress to Enjoy Winter - Be Covid-wise

Working with our partners this year has taught us so much about being COVID Wise. This handy printout was designed with OCYI partners to help keep Ottawa's children, youth and their families warm and safer this winter. Bilingual copies went out in each Winter Kit and were also distributed individually as handouts.

### Dress to Enjoy Winter

**Layering is key!**  
**Tip:** Dressing in layers provides extra warmth when you are outside. If you get too hot you can cool off by opening zippers or taking a layer off when you are indoors where it is heated.

**First layer (or base) layer:**

- Thermal top and thermal underwear, leggings or long johns

**Second (or middle) layer:**

- Your regular clothes, plus a warm sweater or sweatshirt

**Third (or top) layer:**

- Winter jacket that is waterproof and windproof
- Winter snow pants
- Wool socks

**Tips:**

- Avoid wearing cotton t-shirt as a first layer or cotton socks that will absorb sweat and make you feel cold as you cool.
- Carry extra socks and mittens if you are out for long time or in case they get wet.
- Hand and toe warmers can add warmth when it is very cold outside
- Mittens are warmer than gloves. Consider layering mittens on top of the gloves.
- Consider buying winter boots with removable liners. They can be removed for easy drying.
- Do not stay outdoors if you are wet and cold. Change into dry gear as soon as possible.
- Tips to prevent frostbite and hypothermia can be found online:  
[www.ottawapublichealth.ca/ColdWeather/](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/ColdWeather/)
- Label your child's belongings as they are easily mixed up or dropped.



**Keep hands, ears, face and toes warm by wearing:**

- Warm mittens or gloves
- A hat that cover ears
- Earmuffs
- Neck warmer
- Warm winter boots that are insulated and waterproof

**Keep babies warm:**

- A snowsuit or bunting bag is great way to protect baby from the cold. Ensure babies are dressed in layers of warm clothes inside outerwear and have mitts, hats and extra socks on.
- You can keep your baby close to your body by using a baby carrier.

### Be COVID Wise

**Be COVID Wise**


- W** - Wear a mask or face covering.
- I** - Isolate yourself from others when you are sick and get tested promptly if you have COVID-19 like symptoms.
- S** - Stay two metres (six feet) apart from those outside your household.
- E** - Exercise proper hand hygiene; wash your hands regularly or use hand sanitizer.

**Tip:** Wear a fabric mask under a scarf to keep your face warm outdoors. If you are wearing a disposable paper mask have extra ones and replace them once they get wet.

Outdoor activities are good for both physical and mental health and usually carry a lower risk of COVID transmission than indoor activities when you follow distancing guidelines. Lower the risk of COVID-19 by choosing activities that can be done with just your household contacts. See Ottawa Public Health's COVIDwise Winter Activities page for ideas to get outside and Enjoy Winter.

**For more information** check out Ottawa Public Health's webpages:

- Preventing Cold Related Injuries:  
[www.ottawapublichealth.ca/ColdWeather/](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/ColdWeather/)
- Staying COVIDWise:  
[www.OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDWise](http://www.OttawaPublicHealth.ca/COVIDWise)





## Alignment

OCYI's third strategic priority is to improve alignment of services in order to ensure equitable access to mental health supports for children and youth across the City.

Recognizing that many local children and youth rely on services provided by our partner organizations to support their physical and mental health, OCYI led numerous initiatives to provide assistance and resources to its' partners and community programs in their efforts to adapt programming within the COVID-19 context.



# COVID Wise Event

On Wednesday, November 17th, OCYI hosted “COVID Wise”, a lunchtime webinar, facilitated by Crime Prevention Ottawa. The goal of this event was to provide staff and volunteers of children and youth programming agencies in Ottawa, such as critical hours programs, including homework clubs and before and after school programs, with an opportunity to learn and ask questions about keeping their activities and facilities safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 50 guests attended the live event which included simultaneous translation in French.



Answers were provided to specific questions and information exchanged on topics of in-person programming, mask-wearing, COVID-19 case management and program closure, virtual programming and mental health. Moderated by Danielle Vernooy, Interim OCYI Project Coordinator, OCYI is grateful to the following COVID Wise panel of experts:

- Sarah Erdman, Medical Resident, Ottawa Public Health
- Katy Prusakowski, Manager, Recreation, Cultural & Facility Services Dept., City of Ottawa
- Medin Admasu, Chief Programs Officer for the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa
- Linda Cove, Public Health Nurses with Mental Health team at Ottawa Public Health

For more information to and to view recordings of COVID Wise please visit the **OCYI website**.

*“The COVID Wise initiative provided a great forum for discussing our current experiences as colleagues working with children and youth. The challenges of our current realities is felt across the sector but our lessons learned are different and sharing that provides an opportunity for us all to adjust and better meet community needs.*

*The ability to continue offering programs and services has allowed us to maintain our relationships with the families we serve and ensure we are prepared to deal with the impact of COVID-19 on the social and emotional development of children and youth.*

*As a child, organizations like BGC Ottawa were crucial to my development and well-being, along with many other kids in my community. Now as the Chief Programs Officer of BGC Ottawa, I want to ensure that Ottawa’s children and youth continue to receive the benefits that I did, even if that means finding new ways to deliver programs during the pandemic.”*

**Medin Admasu**  
Chief Programs Officer  
BGC Ottawa



# Critical Hours Programs Stakeholder Evaluation

As part of the United Way Ottawa’s Emergency Community Support Fund (ECSF), OCYI was tasked with developing resources to guide Ottawa organizations to continue to accomplish the goals of their program in a safe and sustainable way while minimizing risk due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To inform the development of these resources, OCYI looked to Critical Hours program staff and management to broaden our understanding of the experiences the Critical Hours sector faced delivering programming between March and December 2020. To gather this information, eight key informant interviews were conducted with staff from programs across the Critical Hours sector in Ottawa.

Interviewees were all, without exception, very eager and keen to share what they have done with their programs over the past year. The mental health of youth is a key concern for Critical Hours program staff as well as the challenges in reaching children, youth and families that haven’t been in contact for some time. The Critical Hours sector worked hard to adapt programming to virtual offerings and have incorporated creative ways to keep kids engaged. Staff are also feeling there are and there was an overarching theme of strong staff teams. “Zoom fatigue” was referred by to some degree by most of the interviewees, for children, youth and professionals and communities as well. There was a strong sense across all programs that they did all they could do within the restrictions imposed.

All of the organizations interviewed, without exception, made note of the important contributions that OCYI has made to their success over the past year.



# Virtual Programming 101 event

OCYI organized a Virtual Programming 101 event targeting staff and volunteers of agencies serving children and youth in Ottawa. The event was hosted by Crime Prevention Ottawa on March 31st, 2021 and brought together panelists from the BGC of Ottawa, Christie Lake Kids and the City of Ottawa’s Recreation, Cultural & Facility Services. This vibrant group of panelists shared their knowledge gained and lessons learned in adapting their programming to virtual delivery due to the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.





# Messages of support



CHEO is proud to support OCYI and to work in partnership on many fronts. OCYI is a great resource for the community and as a partner of the Kids Come First (KCF) Health Team, the network is directly involved in supporting the well-being of children, youth and their families.

The important work done by OCYI in various sectors of our community is a great benefit – impacting education, community agencies, critical hours programming and priority neighbourhoods, just to name a few. Furthermore, we are moving towards improved alignment between the KCF Health Team and OCYI with collaborative initiatives such as updating the Know What to Do Guide, a mental health town hall event and realigning our structures to make sure we are all rowing in the same direction for our city’s kids. These past 13 months have had enormous impacts on the education, development and well-being of kids – so we all need to work together to respond to what children, youth and families need as we pull out of the pandemic.



**Alex Munter**  
President & CEO  
CHEO

It is my pleasure to congratulate the Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative for a successful year, and to thank the OCYI members and staff team for the leadership they have shown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for working with United Way East Ontario and others to address the serious issues faced by vulnerable children and youth in our region, and for playing a key role in setting priorities for infants, children, youth and families in our communities.

As a founding member and long-time supporter of the OCYI, United Way East Ontario was pleased to provide both financial and in-kind support last year, for the OCYI’s secretariat and for two pandemic response projects. These included the “Make a Plan for a Safe Return” project that identified promising practices for critical hours programming during the pandemic, and the “Enjoy Winter Kits” project developed in partnership with the Ottawa Community Housing Foundation.

United Way East Ontario’s aspiration is that every young person has the chance to succeed in school and in life, no matter their personal circumstances. We are proud to work in partnership with the more than 80 OCYI members to foster healthy development for all children and youth through research, advocacy and program development.

Wishing you continued success in the coming year as we collectively build a more equitable future, through the pandemic and beyond.



**Michael Allen**  
President and CEO,  
United Way East Ontario

As Medical Officer of Health for the Ottawa Public Health (OPH) Unit, I am proud to have partnered with the OCYI sharing the same goal of ensuring that all children and youth in Ottawa reach their full potential and grow up great!

The work conducted by the OCYI is significant in creating an environment in Ottawa where all children and youth are supported by bringing together several local organizations to work together to guide and influence policy.

The OCYI has been and continues to be an incredibly important partner, ally and resource for OPH, particularly at this time when Ottawa’s children and youth need our support more than ever as we adapt to new challenges amidst a global pandemic. The OCYI supports OPH specifically, by highlighting the needs and strengths of children and youth in Ottawa to help us prioritize areas of action, sharing resources with us, and helping us to evaluate if we are improving the situation for children and youth in Ottawa through a shared evaluation approach.

The OCYI works hard to support the children and youth in Ottawa so that they can feel empowered by the education, resources and guidance they receive from their teachers, parents, and community to make informed choices for themselves about their health, and I am extremely proud to call them one of OPH’s partners in health.



**Dr. Vera Etches,**  
**MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC**  
Medical Officer of Health  
Ottawa Public Health Unit  
(Steering Committee  
Member)



# OCYI 2020-21

## Financial Statement

	Revenue	Expenses	Balance
Balance Forward (April 1)			\$70,205.49
Revenue			
United Way East Ontario	\$75,000.00		
Parent Preschool Resource Centre	\$5,299.29		
CHEO	\$12,000.00		
Ottawa Public Health	\$15,000.00		
Ottawa Catholic School Board	\$5,000.00		
Ottawa Police Services	\$5,000.00		
Ottawa-Carleton District School Board	\$20,000.00		
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa	\$1,250.00		
Funds transfer	\$3,098.45		
	\$141,647.74		
Expenses			
Salaries and Benefits		\$97,989.58	
Hardware and software		\$3,576.59	
Graphics design		\$602.40	
Project evaluations		\$16,009.95	
		\$118,178.52	
March 31st Fund Balance			\$93,674.71





# Member list of Partner Organizations

- Algonquin College
- Andrew Fleck Childcare Services
- Annavale Head Start Nursery
- Bethany Hope Centre
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Ottawa
- Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa
- Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction
- Carleton University
- CentrepoinTE Co-operative Nursery School
- Champlain Maternal Newborn Regional Program
- CHEO
- Child Care Council of Ottawa
- Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
- Children's Inclusion Support Services
- Children's Village of Ottawa Carleton
- Christie Lake Kids
- City of Ottawa – Community and Social Services
- City of Ottawa - Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services
- City View Child & Family Services
- Centre éducatif Coeur des jeunes
- Community Action Program for Children
- Connect with Kids
- Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE)
- Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO)
- Cornerstone Children's Centre
- Crime Prevention Ottawa
- Crossroads Children's Mental Health Centre
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres
- Education Foundation of Ottawa
- Elmridge School Age Program
- Family Services Ottawa
- Grandir ensemble
- Hawthorne Meadows Nursery School
- Kanata Research Park Family Centre
- KidSport Ottawa
- Le Cap
- Lowertown Good Neighbours Community House
- Makonsag
- Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC)
- Minwasshin Lodge
- Mothercraft Ottawa
- Nanny Goat Hill Headstart Nursery School
- Nepean Housing Corporation
- Osgoode Youth Association
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)
- Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB)
- Ottawa Chinese Community Services
- Regroupement des services éducatifs à l'enfance d'Ottawa
- **Coalition of Community Health and Resources Centres of Ottawa**
  - Carlington Community Health Centre
  - Centretown Community Health Centre
  - Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre
  - Lowertown Community Resource Centre
  - Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre
  - Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre
  - Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre

- Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre
- Sandy Hill Community Health Centre
- Somerset West Community Health Centre
- South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre
- South Nepean Community Health Centre
- Vanier Community Service Centre
- Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre
- **Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses**
  - Banff Avenue
  - Blair Court
  - Britannia Woods
  - Caldwell Family Centre
  - Carson's
  - Confederation Court
  - Deborah Dynes Family House
  - Foster Farm Family House
  - Lowertown Good Neighbours Community House
  - Michele Heights
  - Morrison Gardens
  - Pinecrest-Terrace
  - Rochester Heights
  - Russell Heights
  - Winthrop Court
- OCH Foundation
- Ottawa Police Service
- Ottawa Community Immigrant Services
- Ottawa Insight (Community Foundations Ottawa)
- Ottawa Network for Education (ONFE)
- Ottawa Police Service
- Ottawa Public Health
- Ottawa Public Library
- Parent Resource Centre
- Pathways to Education
- Pickering Centre for Research in Human Development
- First Words
- Rideauwood Family and Addiction Services
- Rural Family Connections
- Salvation Army
- Service Coordination Support
- Social Planning Council Ottawa
- Somali Centre for Family Services
- St. Mary's Home
- Suicide Prevention Network
- The Door Youth Centre
- The Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families
- United Way of East Ontario
- Vanier Co-operative Childcare Centre
- Westboro Nursery School
- YMCA-YWCA
- Youth Services Bureau
- YouthNet
- Youville Centre

## Steering Committee

- Deputy Chief Steve Bell, Ottawa Police Services (Co-chair)
- Johanne Levesque, Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services (Co-Chair)
- Alex Munter, CHEO
- Andrew Hendriks, Ottawa Public Health
- Ann Mahoney, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO)
- Brett Reynolds, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)
- Dan Chenier, City of Ottawa
- Dennise Taylor-Gilhen, United Way of Eastern Ontario
- Dr. Vera Etches, Ottawa Public Health (OPH)
- Janis Phillips, City of Ottawa
- Joanne Lowe, Youth Services Bureau/CHEO
- Kelly Raymond, Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
- Marie-France Paquette, Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE)
- Michael Hone, Crossroads Children's Mental Health Centre
- Mohamed Sofa, United Way East Ontario
- Naini Cloutier, Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres
- Nancy Worsfold, Crime Prevention Ottawa (CPO)
- Susan Ingram, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Ottawa
- Suzanne Obiorah, City of Ottawa
- Tania Renaud-Fournier, Le CAP
- Tom D'Amico, Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB)





# Thank You

## About Us

The Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative works together to foster the healthy development of all children and youth through research, advocacy and program development.

Our vision is for children and youth in Ottawa to have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

### Twitter & Instagram

@OCYL\_Ottawa

### Email

[info@growingupgreat.ca](mailto:info@growingupgreat.ca)



Visit Our Website

[www.Growingupgreat.ca](http://www.Growingupgreat.ca)