



# Summary

**What Children, Youth, Parents and  
Caregivers**

**Had to Say About the**

**Children and Youth Agenda Framework**

Engagement Strategy  
October 2007 - February 2008

PARTNERS



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# Summary - What Children, Youth, Parents and Caregivers Had to Say

## Introduction

In 2006, the City of Ottawa and United Way/Centraide Ottawa partnered to initiate a community collaborative approach to planning for the needs of Ottawa's children, youth, and their parents and caregivers through the creation of a Children and Youth Agenda (C&YA). In order to hear what is important to the community, the C&YA project team connected with children, youth, parents and caregivers through various methods such as one-on-one conversations, focus groups or surveys. Their input influenced the creation of the Framework for Promoting the Healthy Development of Children and Youth.

What the community had to say has been summarized in this report. The information has been organized according to the four key elements of the Framework for Promoting Healthy Child and Youth Development.

- Meeting fundamental needs - the basic necessities people require in order to survive. This includes food, clothing, shelter and health care.
- Safe and caring environments - support a child or youth's ability to develop in a safe, caring, and supportive environment where they are respected and engaged, and are able to interact, learn and grow.
- Opportunities to develop competencies - a child or youth is able to reach his or her full potential through recreation / leisure / cultural / arts activities that give them the opportunity to develop self-esteem and acquire and / or enhance age appropriate physical, intellectual and social skills.
- Stable and nurturing relationships - loving, consistent connections, interactions and settings where children and youth are supported, stimulated, and feel valued and a sense of belonging and cohesion.

This report is being distributed to those individuals who took the time to share their thoughts and opinions with us, as well as service providers working with children and youth.

For more information on the Framework for Promoting Healthy Child and Youth Development, created by the Children and Youth Agenda, please contact:

Pauline Daling  
Project Manager, Children and Youth Agenda  
City of Ottawa  
(613) 580-2424 ext. 24180  
[Pauline.Daling@ottawa.ca](mailto:Pauline.Daling@ottawa.ca)

OR Josée Adam  
Director, Children and Youth Agenda  
United Way/Centraide Ottawa  
(613) 683-3868  
[jadam@unitedwayottawa.ca](mailto:jadam@unitedwayottawa.ca)

## A. Meeting Fundamental Needs

(Food, shelter, clothing and safety)

| Children (6-12)   | Youth (12+)  | Parents/Caregivers  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a home where I feel safe</li> <li>• Homes with enough space for everyone</li> <li>• Deal with poverty and give more help to people who need it</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you didn't have basic needs you would get sick or die</li> <li>• In order for our society to be sustainable we must meet the basic needs of all in order to promote positive well-being on a larger scale</li> <li>• I believe that once you have your basic needs, it can lead to gaining confidence because you will have all the necessities to build on</li> <li>• Children without basic needs will often eventually turn to illegal activities; to become a productive adult that contributes to society, one must grow up with basic needs met</li> <li>• Having someone at home; not being alone</li> <li>• Police presence in the neighbourhood</li> <li>• Security alarm system at home</li> <li>• Fix up / clean up houses</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income security policies that help families provide for basic needs</li> <li>• Good training / job preparation / information on careers to secure well-paying jobs</li> <li>• Secure employment; good job = able to pay for basic needs</li> <li>• Access to affordable food, nutritional support, breastfeeding information and support</li> <li>• Affordable programs, services, housing and clothing</li> <li>• Clothing and toy donation programs</li> <li>• Loving, caring environment</li> <li>• Supports to the family</li> </ul> |

## B. Safe and Caring Environments

(Home, schools, neighbourhoods and communities that are safe and engaging)

| Children (6-12)  | Youth (12+)   | Parents/Caregivers  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My family makes me happy; having my family around and not being alone</li> <li>• My friends make me happy</li> <li>• Feeling safe in my home and with my family</li> <li>• Able to spend time at the community house / community centre</li> <li>• Parks and play structures that are safe, easy to access and to use</li> <li>• Knowing the people in my neighbourhood, so I feel like I belong and feel safe</li> <li>• Having police around so I feel safe in my neighbourhood</li> <li>• Deal with drugs, violence, bad people, noise and littering in my neighbourhood</li> <li>• School:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Learning – reasonable amount of homework, different classes, computers,</li> <li>○ Social aspect – recess, learning about different people from different places,</li> <li>○ Having nice teachers / principals</li> <li>○ Being active – liking gym class, field trips, after-school programs</li> <li>○ Feeling safe at school; help dealing with lockdowns</li> <li>○ Smaller class sizes; modify rules (too strict); use different ways of teaching</li> <li>○ Help us deal with discrimination and bullying</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Eliminate smoking around kids</li> <li>• Care for the environment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everybody needs a safe place to lay their head and feel they belong somewhere</li> <li>• It is important to grow up in a caring community – if you have a good childhood you will probably have a good future</li> <li>• Parents who are at home</li> <li>• Clean up / light up the neighbourhood</li> <li>• Keep my neighbourhood safe and healthy</li> <li>• Neighbours who care and look out for one another</li> <li>• Loving, supportive environment</li> <li>• Provide more activities for youth</li> <li>• Deal with the drugs, violence, burglaries, racism, discrimination and prejudices in my neighbourhood</li> <li>• Make public transportation more affordable and more accessible by improving frequency and timing of service</li> <li>• For school to be more effective:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Good teachers committed to their work</li> <li>○ Friends at school who care</li> <li>○ Reduce stress - need more time for projects; or less projects; help with managing workload &amp; homework</li> <li>○ Help with transportation to/ from school</li> <li>○ Do better planning for Code Yellow / Red</li> <li>○ Safety cameras; more teachers to supervise</li> <li>○ Address bullying and violence</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pressure to get good grades; to graduate</li> <li>• Difficulty managing time between school work, paid work, chores at home</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive caring parents with time to spend with their children, creating a loving, caring atmosphere</li> <li>• Extended family available</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Friendly neighbours who look out for each others' children</li> <li>• Safe places to play / interact in neighbourhood</li> <li>• Learning, recreational, arts and culture activities close to home</li> <li>• Access to parks, libraries, recreational, community facilities close to home</li> <li>• Accessible spaces / buildings / programs that incorporate and support children with special needs</li> <li>• Open, frequent communication among parents, teachers and school administration</li> <li>• Qualified, caring teachers</li> <li>• Educational assistants to support children with special needs</li> <li>• Resource counsellors in the schools who are sensitive to / reflective of various cultures</li> <li>• Extra help for students with learning difficulties</li> <li>• Regulated before and after-school child care</li> <li>• Schools that are located in the neighbourhood or that provide financial assistance with transportation</li> <li>• Quality, affordable early learning and child care, and education, providing equality of opportunity through specialized programs</li> <li>• Feeling safe and secure, fire safety</li> </ul> |

### C. Opportunities to Develop Competencies

(Learning, recreation, social skills, peers and self-esteem)

| Children (6-12)   | Youth (12 +)   | Parents/Caregivers   |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in sports, arts and other recreational activities</li> <li>• Being outside and being active close to home, in my neighbourhood</li> <li>• Time to play video games and spend time on the computer</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone needs to build skills and self-confidence if they are going to be an active participant in their own life and in society</li> <li>• Without skills, we can't advance in life by getting a good job; without new skills, youth cannot build their future</li> <li>• Youth are leaders of both today and tomorrow; and need to be given the tools to grow and make a difference</li> <li>• Slightly less than ½ of youth used services in the community</li> <li>• Reasons cited for not using services included: don't need them; don't feel like it, don't need help, don't interest me, too busy / no time, don't know of any</li> <li>• Favourite free time activities: sports – hockey, soccer, basketball, swimming; music – guitar, piano, listening to music; dance, reading, watch TV, go to movies, play video games; time on the computer, MSN; hang out with friends</li> <li>• 60% of youth participated in recreational, cultural, educational activities - most frequently cited activities reflected those noted for preferred free time activities (see previous bullet point)</li> <li>• Reasons for not participating included:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Don't want to; doesn't interest me</li> <li>○ No time due to homework / working</li> <li>○ Not affordable</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 56% of youth reported feeling like they had opportunities to pursue their goals / interest; 24% reported feeling neutral; and 20% reported feeling unhelpful</li> <li>• 59% of youth reported feeling hopeful about their future; 17% reported feeling neutral; and 24% reported feeling unhelpful</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational supports to parents – positive parenting, constructive discipline, how to deal with bullying</li> <li>• Parental support for families in stress – parents who don't feel stressed are better able to send constructive, supportive messages to their children</li> <li>• Children have opportunities for social interaction with their peers</li> <li>• Recreation / leisure / cultural / arts activities – opportunities to experience success and learn new skills</li> <li>• Opportunities to interact with all kinds of children in community settings – sports programs, library programs, clubs, community sponsored events, city run programs</li> <li>• Positive role models – home, school, community</li> <li>• Elements to build self-esteem incorporated into programs in the school / community</li> <li>• Tutors / homework clubs for children</li> <li>• Financial supports such as transportation assistance to get to programs / services</li> <li>• Accessible and affordable services for children with special needs – eg. camps, training, recreation / leisure / cultural pursuits, occupational therapy, speech pathology, parent relief,</li> <li>• Be proud and share culture with children so they can find their identity</li> </ul> |

## D. Stable and Nurturing Relationships

(Connections, interactions and settings that instil a sense of belonging)

| Children (6-12)   | Youth (12 +)  | Parents/Caregivers  |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling loved and feeling like I belong</li> <li>• Spending time with friends</li> <li>• More time to build relationships with a caring adult – spend more time with us, listen to us and trust us</li> <li>• Having a parent (especially a mother), teacher or other adult to go to when needing help</li> <li>• Feeling like I have someone that listens to me</li> <li>• Help dealing with illness or death in the family, with racism, with bullying, and with fighting among family and friends</li> <li>• Help to understand and deal with violence and wars</li> <li>• Giving back – helping others who need help</li> <li>• Be honest</li> <li>• Be constructive, not critical and please don't tease</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have positive and healthy relationships then you are not alone as you face life's challenges</li> <li>• Life is about connecting with someone else; the basic need is to feel and be loved</li> <li>• Healthy relationships are so important because they're the foundation of good social skills</li> <li>• If you have strong relationships you are kept safe; nurtured so you learn to be self-confident; looked after and have a home</li> <li>• You need family and friends to get through the rough times, and also to feel a purpose and connection to the world</li> <li>• Having a caring family</li> <li>• Strong family unit; supportive loving parents</li> <li>• Challenge to make friends, build relationships with peers at school</li> <li>• Bullying happens to me at school</li> <li>• Challenge to deal with conflicts at home between parents, between children and parents, among siblings</li> <li>• Older youth spoke about power struggles in the home and dealing with drinking</li> <li>• 74% of youth reported that they thought that adults listened to them</li> <li>• Primary suggestions to improve communication was for adults to take time to listen, to understand and discuss things</li> <li>• 82% of youth had someone to talk to when they had a problem</li> <li>• In order of frequency - the most frequently cited person that they went to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parents – 47%</li> <li>○ Friends – 39%</li> <li>○ Siblings – 16%</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of love, positive reinforcement, patience, well-fed family</li> <li>• Affordable / free programs and activities in the neighbourhood (sports, leisure, cultural) such as: play groups; programs for whole family; activities in libraries, schools; drop-in centres</li> <li>• Have 'show and tell' programs at school for children to share and be proud of their cultures</li> <li>• Parental supports to help children deal with negative peer pressure associated with drugs, alcohol, crime, media images of youth, TV, internet</li> <li>• Active recreation board, community association, volunteer opportunities</li> <li>• Policies to support work-life balance: for parents to spend time with children; and for children to learn this value as they grow up</li> </ul> |



## What Parents and Caregivers Like About Raising Their Children in Ottawa

Overall parents and caregivers responded positively to the question: *"Is there anything else you would like to say that is really important to you when you think about the healthy development of your children?"* Their responses are listed below.

- I really appreciate the wide range of recreational programs available throughout the city of Ottawa (skating, swimming, day camps, special interest workshops, etc.)
- We are 'Very Blessed' in the city of Ottawa, with many, numerous supports and services for youth and families. E.g. United Way, etc.
- I know that the Ontario Early Years Centre offers a lot of services that I intend to use and have used. The Ottawa Nurse Visit program was really good.
- It is really difficult to understand how to answer the questions because I think that I have the support I need already, and if I would need something I know where to go and / or where to ask. Thank you.
- My son is extremely intelligent but has problems with social activities, and going to the library over the past year has helped him significantly in interacting with other children.
- The preschool programs are very important to help develop my child. The prices are not conducive to my budget, but the free library programs are as valuable as paid programs and are sometimes better.
- The Well-Baby-Drop-Ins are so very helpful to instil confidence in how I am feeding and nurturing my child. More assistance with toddlers would be great.
- We are very grateful for the community services offered to us here in Orleans - lots of recreational activities etc. to keep them active in their development.
- As a grandparent I enjoy bringing my grandchildren to the library. Children learn so much in this clean, safe and pleasant environment. The programs provide them with invaluable social learning opportunities.
- I am satisfied with the services available in Ottawa.
- I am satisfied with the services for my children.
- Nothing more to add; the health system is great!
- All the education is very good in Canada.
- My children thrive because of the dedicated individuals that care for them and educate them at Ottawa's Children Treatment Centre. Programming of this nature must be sustained and expanded upon.

## A Special Thank you

The C&YA Project Team would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of Success by 6, and in particular, Paul Steeves, Manager of Research and Evaluation who provided invaluable technical expertise and support throughout the various stages of the engagement strategy.

We would also like to thank the numerous agencies, organizations, networks and service providers who willingly gave of their time and knowledge and who helped us link with various groups in the community.

In addition, the C&YA Project Team would like to extend a warm thank you to all the parents, caregivers, children and youth who graciously provided their input via the channels of focus groups or surveys.

Thank you for your collaborative spirit!

## Next Steps

The Children and Youth Agenda will be undertaking the following initiatives:

1. Publishing the Framework for Promoting Healthy Development for Children and Youth in booklet form that will highlight the influencing factors from prenatal to early adulthood and provide tools to assist with the application of the Framework when working with Children and Youth;
2. Establishing a website on [www.ottawakids.ca](http://www.ottawakids.ca) (coming soon!)
3. Developing and implementing 'Action Planning' workshops for people working with children and youth to assist them to create strategies for how they could utilize the Framework in their work; and
4. Establishing a Community Leadership structure to promote the Framework and focus on issues relating to the full age spectrum from prenatal to early adulthood.

# APPENDICES

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## Profile of Participants

### Children aged 6 -12 years

- 167 children told us what was important to them
- 51% of the children were English speaking and 49% were French speaking

### Youth aged 12 +

- 469 Surveys completed
- 61% survey respondents – between the ages 12 – 14 years old
- 33% survey respondents – between the ages 15 – 17 years old
- 6% survey respondents – aged 18 years and older
- 37% survey respondents - English
- 54% survey respondents – French
- 9% survey respondents – no response
- 44% survey respondents – Male
- 53% survey respondents – Female
- 1.2% survey respondents – transgender
- 1.7% survey respondents – no response
- 167% survey respondents - were from eastern Ottawa
- 19% survey respondents - were from western Ottawa
- 9% survey respondents - were from southern Ottawa
- 8% survey respondents - were from central Ottawa
- 0.6% survey respondents - were from east-rural Ottawa
- 0.4% survey respondents - were from west-rural Ottawa
- 3.4% survey respondents - were from south-rural Ottawa
- 96% survey respondents - were enrolled in school
- 0.6% survey respondents - were not enrolled in school
- 3.6% - no response
- 89 youth – provided input during “Every Child Is Sacred *Intergenerational Conversation* Event” – please see end of document for summary of their input

### Parents/Caregivers

- 194 parents told us what was important to them through either focus groups or surveys
- 66% of the parents were English speaking and 34% were French speaking
- 75% had children 0 – 6 years of age
- 55% had children 7 – 12 years of age
- 25% had children 13+ years of age

## Questions Asked during Focus Groups / Or Surveys

### Middle Years Survey / Activity Sheet

1. What is your favourite thing to do after school or on the weekend?
2. What do you like most about your school?
3. What do you like the most about your neighbourhood?
4. What makes you feel happy?
5. What makes you feel sad?
6. What makes you angry?
7. What makes you feel safe?
8. Who do you go to if you need help?
9. What would you do to make your school better?
10. What would you do to make your neighbourhood better?
11. What can adults do to make things better for kids?

### Youth Survey Questions

1. What age group do you belong? 12-14\_\_ 15-17\_\_ 18+\_\_
2. Gender M\_\_ F\_\_ Trans\_\_
3. What Neighbourhood do you live in?
4. Are you presently enrolled in school?  Yes  No
5. What are the challenges you face at: Home, School, Neighbourhood / Community?
6. What supports/ideas do you need to ensure that you have a safe and caring: Home, School, Neighbourhood / Community?
7. What services for youth do you know about in your community?
  - Do you use them?  Yes  No If No, why Not?
8. What do you like to do during your free time?
9. Do you participate in any organized recreational/cultural/educational programs? (Sports leagues, music, language classes)
  - Yes If YES, where? & What program/activities?
  - No If NO, Why Not?
10. Do you think adults listen to what is important to you?
  - Yes
  - No If No, what suggestions do you have for them to listen to you?
11. Do you have someone to talk to when you have a problem?
  - Yes Who would that be (brother, friend, parent)
  - No Why Not?
12. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel you have opportunities to pursue your goals and interests?  
Most Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Least satisfied
13. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel hopeful about your future?  
Most Satisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Least satisfied
14. Please provide your comments...

## Parent Survey Questions

1. How many children do you have? Please indicate how many children you have in each age group.  
0 – 6; 7 – 12; 13 +
2. Parental Role:        Mother \_\_\_\_    Father \_\_\_\_    Other\_\_\_\_
3. In which neighbourhood do you live?
4. In your opinion, what is the most important support(s) that you as a parent need to ensure that your children have a safe and caring: Home, School, Neighbourhood / Community?
5. In your opinion, what is the most important support(s) that you as a parent need to ensure you can provide for the basic needs of your children? (Examples of basic needs: food, shelter, clothing, safety)
6. In your opinion, what is the most important support(s) that you as a parent need to help your children feel good about themselves?
7. In your opinion, what is the most important support(s) that you as a parent need to help your children get along with others and feel a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood?
8. What would you say are the main challenges you face in raising your children so they have a chance to grow up and achieve their full potential?
9. What suggestions do you have for services in Ottawa that would be the most helpful to you in meeting the challenges you noted in question # 8?
10. Is there anything else you would like to say that is really important to you when you think about the healthy development of your children?