

# TAKING STOCK

## How Canadian Child and Youth Agencies are Responding to Economic Challenges

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### Case Study # 2: BC Association of Family Resource Programs

Capacity Building & Knowledge Acquisition:  
Developing an Academic Certificate Program  
for Family Resource Program Practitioners  
in British Columbia

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The Taking Stock full report, all fourteen Case Studies and other supporting documents are available at [www.nacy.ca/taking-stock](http://www.nacy.ca/taking-stock).

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**Capacity Building & Knowledge Acquisition:  
Developing an Academic Certificate Program for  
Family Resource Program Practitioners in British Columbia  
BC Association of Family Resource Programs**

## **Background of the organization**

The BC Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP-BC) is a not-for-profit provincial organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of community-based Family Resource Programs. The programs appeared in BC during the early 1970s, but it was not until 1988 that representatives from 27 organizations throughout the lower mainland gathered to establish a provincial voice for Family Resource Programs.

- Founded in 1989, the Family Place Association of British Columbia became an incorporated society consisting of 33 members, operating out of West Side Family Place in Vancouver.
- In 1998, the name of the association was changed to the BC Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP-BC), which resulted in a stronger link with the national Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (FRP-Canada). The name change communicated a broader, more inclusive provincial identity.
- In 2000, “parent/child interactive drop-in” was identified as the defining characteristic of Family Resource Programs. Using this criterion as the definitive marker of an FRP, research conducted later that year resulted in the identification of 176 FRPs operating in the province.
- As a result of the National Children’s Agenda and the First Ministers Agreement, in 2001 FRP-BC, in partnership with the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD), distributed Enhancement Grants to 143 Family Resource Programs in BC.
- In 2002, the BC Association of Family Resource Programs relocated from their West Side Family Place headquarters to a centrally located full-time office at Granville and Broadway in Vancouver.
- In 2007, FRP-BC received funding from MCFD-ECD branch to complete a Family Resource Program post-secondary certificate and to develop field related Provincial Standards of Practice.
- Also in 2007, FRP-BC received \$1 Million from MCFD-ECD branch to set up one-time-only grants that member organizations could apply for. These grants enabled multi-service agencies to partner with or provide services to existing, isolated FRPs and to help sustain smaller FRPs located in rural areas of the North and Interior regions and parts of Vancouver Island.
- In 2013, FRP-BC was one of seven provincial organizations approved to receive public policy funding from the United Way. FRP-BC’s project was entitled, *An Integrated System of Child Care, Early Learning and Family Support*, and the purpose of the project was to promote and advocate for a model of family support and family resource programs at the policy level within the spectrum of Early Childhood Development in BC.

FRP-BC currently represents over 220 Family Resource Centres and other early learning programs around BC. Its goal is to enhance the capacity of member agencies and to fulfill its mandate to “strengthen parenting, promote social networking, reduce isolation, and promote community cohesion”. Family Resource Programs protect vulnerable families by providing prevention-focused services that mitigate the incidence of abuse and neglect.

## **Issue or situation**

Although there are no formal academic requirements to work in a Family Resource Program, the provincial association has historically provided high quality in-service training for its members. In 2005, FRP-BC began to address the lack of formal training for Family Resource Program practitioners in the province and established an advisory committee to explore academic credentialing for practitioners. At the time there were only two post-secondary programs in Canada designed for practitioners working in Family Resource Programs: Ryerson University's Family Supports Certificate program offered as a combined classroom and online format, and a stream on family support offered as part of Mount Saint Vincent University's Bachelors in Gerontology and Family Support program.

## **Challenges**

FRP-BC member agencies are spread across all regions of the province; many of the programs are small, grass roots non-profits and others are imbedded within large multi service agencies. The challenge in looking at the issue of certification was determining the most efficient method of delivering the training, with consideration for type of curriculum developed (classroom and/or online), location, delivery method, costs, and prerequisites among others. Practitioner and agency feedback was solicited through surveys and feedback forms, and experts were consulted from academic institutions to advise the committee.

## **Actions taken**

In 2007, FRP-BC acquired funding from United Way of the Lower Mainland, the Vancouver Foundation, and the provincial government to develop a competency-based post-secondary program to be delivered both face-to-face and online to its members. FRP-BC then approached the Justice Institute of BC to undertake a feasibility study to determine the viability of developing and delivering courses to its members. The study determined that there was a need for competency-based training, and that there was employer support for a professional training certificate. Consequently, FRP-BC worked with the Justice Institute to develop a set of desired learning outcomes. Using the learning outcomes as a framework, FRP-BC developed eight classroom courses as the foundation of the FRP Certificate.

In May 2008, the provincial government released *Strong, Safe and Supported, A Commitment to BC's Children & Youth*. This integrated framework is designed to address parent and child literacy and to enhance young children's readiness to learn. Two key aspects of the framework include the expansion of Family Resource Programs and the creation of StrongStart Early Learning Centres. In 2009, the pilot classroom offering of the certificate was delivered at the Justice Institute to 23 students chosen from more than 100 applicants working in the field of FRP and StrongStart Early Learning Centres. Students were selected to represent a broad variety of FRPs - from urban to rural, First Nations, serving immigrant populations, small stand-alone programs, and programs within large multi service social agencies. The evaluation of the pilot was excellent, confirming the value of the training.

Following the 2009 pilot delivery, the eight courses were reviewed and rewritten to include Aboriginal content to strengthen cultural competencies.

## Outcomes

2011/12 saw the third successful delivery of the FRP Certificate program at the Justice Institute of BC with a full complement of 24 students registered for the 12 days of classroom courses. Feedback has been very positive, both from students/practitioners as well as from their FRP agencies. FRP-BC plans to develop online courses, and a series of workshops and toolkits that will expand upon the Certificate content.

## Feedback

Comments from the 2011/12 students at the end of their twelve-day program reflect their knowledge acquisition as well as practitioner and agency capacity building, and included the following:

- *I appreciated to be part of the FRP course; I discovered all the values my family and my community taught me; I feel stronger in being in a leadership role in my FRP practice and committed to apply the best Family Centre practices; I learned many skills and tools from the great and knowledgeable teachers- outstanding colleagues. Thank you.*
- *I learned lots of tools to support the families*
- *I appreciated that I am part of the FRP certificate program... I am clearer about the values and practices in an FRP program.*
- *I felt challenged to reassess my role in an FRP and continue to re-evaluate the program I work in to make sure I am reaching those who need my help.*
- *I feel honoured that I am one of the first 75 people in the province to be chosen for this course as it gives a credential to what we all have known for years about our profession working with families – its valuable and it matters!*
- *I feel connected; I appreciate all of the caring and loving energy flowing around daily in the class; and I feel refreshed, relieved, and walk away with wisdom.*
- *I am clearer about what my role is to be a Family Practitioner.*
- *I learned great new information; I feel empowered and more knowledgeable about my responsibility; I appreciated our team work and their support.*
- *I appreciated the strength and beauty each individual in this room brings to the various FRPs throughout the Province; I wish that all FRP staff in BC could have the opportunity to take the certificate course.*
- *I appreciated the high quality of instruction but most importantly the high quality of my classmates- thank you for teaching me!*
- *I'm clearer about my role and the breadth of information and resources I can share with my families.*
- *I feel empowered as an FRP practitioner to make change.*
- *I feel appreciated...being reenergized and fuller in skills to be a better practitioner.*

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