



Our Healthy Child Development program provides an inclusive early learning experience for children and their families in a safe and supportive environment. Learn more inside.

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Tony Diniz, CEO

Welcome to our new *Healthy Development* newsletter. Designed for parents, caregivers and those working in the sector, our hope is that this newsletter becomes your go-to source for information about early childhood development and intervention.

As an accredited children's mental health agency, Child Development Institute (CDI) provides a range of programs and services for children, youth and their families. We offer evidence-informed programs across four streams: Early Intervention Services, Family Violence Services, the Integra Program and Healthy Child Development.

Through our Healthy Child Development program, we provide an inclusive early learning experience for children, from infancy to age 12, and their families in a safe and supportive learning environment.

We hope you will learn more about our programs, services, staff and the role CDI plays in nurturing healthy childhood development.

WHY THE EARLY YEARS MATTER

At Child Development Institute, we deliver proven programs that help children and families discover their strengths and abilities, access the tools they need to succeed and learn to overcome challenges.

Our five Early Learning Centres and the Parkdale-High Park Ontario Early Years Centre provide a high-quality early childhood education and care program. Our qualified registered Early Childhood Educators and Early Childhood Assistants work hard to provide an enriched learning environment that is safe and nurturing.

"For many children and their families child care is their first group experience," explains Carolee Crooks, CDI's Director of Healthy Child Development. "Child care staff are often the first to observe problems or delays in a child's development. When we observe a child experiencing difficulties, we work with the parents/caregivers to address the need by accessing resources to support not only the child but also their family," she says.

Through CDI's early intervention programs, our staff are able to identify early signs of delay in a child's physical, social, cognitive or language development.

"By intervening early and providing children and families with the support they need, we are able to reduce the impact of early delays on the child's overall development," explains Carolee Crooks.

Contact the Early Learning Centre nearest you to learn more about CDI's early intervention programs.

EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Child Care Consultation Services: We work with child care centre staff and parents to develop individual learning plans and strategies for children with special needs to support their inclusion and well-being in child care.

Start Right Social Skills: We deliver a 12-week school-based social skills group for children in kindergarten experiencing difficulty adjusting to the social and emotional demands of the classroom. Through structured small group "play and learn" activities, children develop confidence and skills to deal more effectively with challenges in the classroom and on the playground.

Family and Community Counselling: We provide counselling to families with children experiencing social, emotional or behaviour issues. Using a family-centered approach, we tailor services to each family's needs. Parents have the opportunity to better understand and develop ways to support their child's unique needs and strengthen the parent child relationship.

Parenting Group for Anxious Pre-schoolers: We work with parents of pre-school age children who are experiencing anxiety, having difficulty overcoming fears or are socially reserved. The group is co-led by a Toronto East General Hospital psychiatrist specializing in childhood anxiety and a CDI social worker. A doctor's referral is required.

MEET OUR FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS

As part of our commitment to families, CDI has a team of Family Support Workers who spend time between the Parkdale-High Park Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) and the agency's five Early Learning Centres connecting face-to-face with the families they serve.

"Families are important partners in helping us understand a child's learning needs, and we must work closely together to ensure every child in our care is receiving the support they need," says Coralie Braithwaite, Director of the Parkdale-High Park OEYC and Coordinator of Support Services, Healthy Child Development at CDI.

While our Early Learning Centres provide full-time child care for families, the Parkdale-High Park OEYC (one of 24 provincially-funded OEYC's located across Toronto) serves as a community hub for local families. It is an essential destination for families seeking parenting support and a close connection with other families in the neighbourhood.

"Our Family Support Workers build close connections with parents and children to help them engage in their environment, establish caring and responsive relationships, and develop feelings of security and belonging," says Coralie Braithwaite.

For new parents, connecting with a Family Support Worker can be an important early step in the parenting process. "The program is one of the first things that got me out of the house after I had Piper," says Sam, a parent who regularly attends the *Connecting with Baby* program delivered by CDI's Family Support Workers. "I love learning the songs we sing in the sessions. They really help to keep Piper entertained when we're at home together during the day," she says.

Our dedicated team encourages healthy development practices and reinforces positive behaviours to help children and families build healthy relationships. They support parents and children by:

- Connecting them with community programs and services across the city of Toronto
- Co-facilitating Parent Advisory Committee meetings at our Early Learning Centres
- Collaborating with partners, like Toronto Public Health, to host information seminars such as *Nobody's Perfect* and *Make the Connection*

"It takes a village to raise a child. We are that village," says Carole, longtime Family Support Worker, CDI.



STAFF PROFILE: MARCIA LEE

Marcia is a Family Support Worker who has been working at CDI for 18 years. Marcia is proud to live and work in the Thorncliffe Park community in Toronto's east end. Each day, Marcia travels to one of our five Early Learning Centres or the Parkdale-High Park OEYC to meet with children, families and community partners. She also leads early childhood programming and parent community meetings.

What's your favourite part of the job? *"I enjoy being a part of and supporting children's developmental journey. I love watching them grow from infancy to grade one, and becoming close with the entire family."*

What do you want parents to know? *"Our programs are an opportunity for parents and children to share their feelings and experiences in a safe, inclusive space where they can enjoy evidence-informed programs. We are here to help you and your child - you will always be welcomed into a supportive environment of Family Support Workers and other parents."*

Contact our location nearest you to learn more about the programs and services in your community.

To learn more about Child Development Institute, visit childdevelop.ca.

PARENTING TIP

Let your child make choices

Children need to feel that they have some control so, whenever possible, give them choices to make. Two options are enough, and you should be comfortable with all options.

For example, ask: *Which shirt would you like to wear today, orange or yellow?* or *Would you like macaroni or soup for lunch today?*

Do not offer choices in situations where an adult's decision is needed, or where there is no real option.



ONTARIO EARLY YEARS CENTRE

We operate the Parkdale-High Park Ontario Early Years Centre (OEYC) in partnership with West Neighbourhood House. Parents and children can access a range of free services and programs and are connected to other community supports.

Parkdale-High Park Ontario Early Years Centre

2918 Dundas St. West
Toronto, ON M6P 1Y8
416-762-3700
email: oeyc@childdevelop.ca

EARLY LEARNING CENTRES

We operate five Early Learning Centres across the city of Toronto, providing licensed child care for children. We also provide school-age care at our Annex location, and a before-and-after Kindergarten program at our Thorncliffe Park location.

Annex Early Learning Centre

161 Madison Avenue
Toronto, ON M5R 2S6
416-924-0545
email: annex@childdevelop.ca

Fraser Mustard Early Learning Centre

82 Thorncliffe Park Drive
Toronto, ON M4H 1K3
416-421-7676
email: frasermustard@childdevelop.ca

Parkdale Early Learning Centre

119 Close Avenue
Toronto, ON M6K 2V2
416-535-6116
email: parkdale@childdevelop.ca

Wellesley Early Learning Centre

495 Sherbourne Street
Toronto, ON M4X 1K7
416-928-9900
email: wellesley@childdevelop.ca

Windermere Early Learning Centre

103 The Queensway
Toronto, ON M6S 5B3
416-763-2734
email: windermere@childdevelop.ca