

## **MIDDLE CHILDHOOD MATTERS COALITION TORONTO**

**VISION:** Toronto will have a comprehensive, integrated, and accessible system of programs and services for all children to enhance their optimal development and to strengthen families

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES:**

1. **Human rights:** the Coalition believes that children are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms and are valued intrinsically as children not only as future productive adults. While parents have the primary responsibility for their children's care and upbringing, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it clear that governments and communities have a duty to help families fulfil their responsibilities and to protect the rights of children (Toronto Children's Charter, February 1999).
2. **Holistic approach:** the Coalition believes that children in middle childhood are influenced by their families, their school, their peers and the broader community as well as by their specific developmental tasks inherent in this stage of development.
3. **Best practices:** the Coalition will promote proven strategies that are innovative, effective and ethical.
4. **Determinants of health:** the Coalition will focus on conditions that affect health including safe environments, adequate income, education and shelter, safe and nutritious food, early childhood development, peace, equity and social justice.
5. **Diversity, access and equity:** the Coalition celebrates the diversity of the families of Toronto, promotes universal access to services and resources and works to eliminate health inequities. The needs of groups and individuals in the community are addressed with respect to their diverse socio-economic status, gender, racial identity, ethnicity, class, sexuality, education/literacy, language, faith/religion, and mental/physical abilities.
6. **Partnership:** the Coalition works in co-operation and equal partnership with community parents and members, organizations and all three levels of government.
7. **Population health:** the Coalition supports the population health approach that focuses on the interrelated conditions and factors that influence the health of populations over the life course, identifies systematic variations in their patterns of occurrence, and applies the resulting knowledge to develop and implement policies and actions to improve the health of populations. The overarching goal is to improve the health status of the entire population and to reduce inequities in health status between population groups.

**MANDATE:** To focus on children 6 to 12 and their families using a community perspective. The Coalition works for systemic change through influencing public policy, advocating, partnership and network development, and supporting best practices.

## **CURRENT AREAS OF FOCUS:**

### ***A. Partnership & Network Development:***

1. Identification and outreach to key stakeholders incorporating diversity, access and equity principles as well as ensuring geographic representation
2. Coalition members will develop partnerships with key stakeholders such as the municipal government, municipal departments, and provincial government representatives
3. Create a unified, consistent and persuasive voice to negotiate the fullest and most prudent use of shared community resources
4. Co-ordinate with other existing networks, partnerships, and coalitions
5. Develop a communication and promotion plan for members and the public
6. Provide opportunities to share information, knowledge exchange and resources

### ***B. Best practices:***

1. Do a comparative review of growth and development research for children 6-12 years
2. Gather knowledge about the significant developmental stages of this age group
3. Create an inventory/overview of existing programs, services and tools for the purpose of educating parents and community,
4. Identify gaps and needs for specific services and tools such as a one stop information line and website
5. Identify gaps and advocate for training for parents, volunteers, community workers and program staff based on best practices for children 6-12 years
6. Create communication materials such as fact sheets to share information

### ***C. Advocacy/Policy Development:***

1. Develop a strategic plan to increase public and political awareness and to address the need for a range of high quality, developmentally appropriate services and supports in communities for children 6-12 years and their families
2. Facilitate the development of parents' and community organizations' ability to advocate on issues affecting children 6-12 years and their families using a community development and capacity building approach.
3. Advocate for and facilitate quality standards in out of school programs and services (e.g. High Five, Toronto Childcare Operating Criteria).

## **ACCOUNTABILITY:**

The Coalition is accountable to families in Toronto. Individual members are also accountable to their own organizational mandates.

## **DECISION MAKING:**

Issues and disagreements are resolved respectfully through ongoing discussions and dialogue between the parties in a way that enhances shared understanding and collaboration.

Decision-making is done by consensus, or if necessary by voting with majority rules (50%+1). Each participating parent or organization representative has one vote and has equal status and voice regardless of the nature or size of the member group or organization.

## **MEMBERSHIP:**

The Coalition is an open Toronto based group with broad representation from many different parents, individuals, and organizations (non-profits, voluntary, corporate, government, academia, etc.) that have a vested interest in children 6-12 years and their families. Membership will reflect the diversity of Toronto as well as have the ability to incorporate a larger city-wide, provincial and federal perspective.

### ***Role of the Chair:***

- Community liaison on behalf of the committee
- Facilitating the meeting agenda.
- The review and distribution of minutes prior to the next meeting.
- Ensuring the printing and distribution of agendas, minutes and any required additional material to members.
- term: one year minimum commitment

### ***Member Responsibilities:***

- Each Committee member is committed to the mandate and the goals of the ***Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto***. Any potential conflict of interest must be declared.
- Members forward any agenda items to the chair prior to each meeting.
- Regular meeting attendance of members is expected.
- Members are responsible for sharing ***Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto*** information to relevant individuals, groups and committees.
- Members will rotate minute taking alphabetically and forward the completed minutes to the chair for distribution.

## **MEETING SCHEDULE:**

Regular monthly committee meetings will be held. Working groups will be established and will create their own meeting dates.

***\*Terms of Reference to be reviewed and revised annually as the Coalition evolves.***

***Updated 2008***