



Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant

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Fifth Annual Report from the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant (PPTC) 2008-2009

Background

The Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant (PPTC) is a contract position funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The Consultant is part of an interdisciplinary approach to address issues in physical, occupational, and speech therapy services for children in British Columbia, particularly recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists. Improved ability to recruit and retain paediatric therapists across this province will result in better access to therapy services that support children with special needs to achieve their full potential and ability to participate in all aspects of community life. The Consultant works under the direction of the Steering Committee for the BC Provincial Consultant for Paediatric Therapists, comprised of representatives from Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech-Language Pathology and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The following report is a summary of the recruitment and retention initiatives directed by the PPTC from the time period April 1, 2008 to – March 31, 2009.

Work Plan Objectives and Accomplishments

The Objectives developed for the 2008-2009 work plan, and the activities and achievements of the PPTC corresponding to each objective are outlined below:

1. Increase the awareness of the value of paediatric therapy services, and the impact of recruitment and retention issues on children and families requiring therapy services

Activities & Achievements

- Participation on the 'Partnerships Project' Steering Committee. This committee works to support ongoing training in communities throughout the province to increase the level of awareness, skills and knowledge of service providers working with children birth to 6 years of age with various disabilities.
- Presented at the Cross Ministry Framework for Action planning day, April 11th in Vancouver, BC. This planning day was the first opportunity for Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Children and Family Development provincial and regional employees to get together and have dialogue surrounding the new Cross Ministry Framework for Action. My presentation described several of the initiatives and projects currently being provided through the Office of the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant, and how these initiatives provide recruitment and retention support to all three Ministries.
- Participation in a group coordinated by UBC OT and BCSOT to lobby the Ministry of Advanced Education on the need for more OT training program seats in BC.
- Face to face meeting and ongoing communication with Judy Thompson, Ministry of Health Director of Health Human Resource Planning. Communicated concerns regarding MoH forecasting models not representative or inclusive of personnel needs in children's therapy services.
- Participation on the 'Mapping and Modeling Project' Steering Committee. This committee is working on a project led by the British Columbia Association of Child Development & Intervention (BCACDI). The project's full title is *Mapping and Modeling of Services for Children & Youth with Special Needs and their Families in B.C.* This project is a component of the Cross Ministry Framework for Action for services for Children and Youth with Special Needs (CYSN), and will produce a comprehensive description of the services for CYSN and their families within BC through the range of community, regional and provincial specialized and sub-specialized service providers across the three sectors of health, education, and children and family services.
- Presentation on therapy services recruitment and retention at a meeting in the East Kootenay facilitated by the 'Children First' coordinator in Cranbrook. Focus of meeting on access to services for children and families in the East Kootenay.
- Meeting and ongoing communication with Susan Illmayer, MoH Rehab Directorate, regarding the Office of the PPTC and opportunities to

collaborate regarding children's therapy services and recruitment and retention initiatives.

2. Promote recruitment initiatives within physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech language pathology disciplines; and explore innovations to engage students in paediatric settings

Activities and Achievements

- Operation and development of www.therapybc.ca website
 - Advertised nationally via professional association (CPA, CASLPA, CAOT) websites and newsletters
 - Positioned in the top 5 search results for 'Therapy jobs in BC' in major search engines such as Google and Yahoo
 - Consistently receives over 2,200 hits a month
 - Continues to provide free job posting services for all publicly funded paediatric therapy positions in BC
 - All new job postings forwarded to all therapy students and job seekers registered with the site
 - Continue to promote the 'Therapy Students' menu on the website, and encourage therapy students to register their email information in order to receive job postings. Ongoing attempts to connect with students in BC and Alberta through therapy training program job fairs, and nationally through direct contact with therapy programs in other provinces, and student reps of national professional associations
 - Added document to 'International' resource section of the site that describes in detail the procedure an internationally trained SLP had to go through to immigrate and find a job in BC
- Presented to 28 UBC PT students April 11th regarding a career in paediatrics. Introduced the group to the therapybc website, and the initiatives offered through the Office of the PPTC.
- Participation on the 'Practice Education Committee' of the BC Academic Health Council. The Practice Education Committee works towards developing and implementing strategies to strengthen the delivery of student practice education in BC.
- Launched 'New Graduate/New to Paediatrics Education Fund.' This fund provided bursaries to therapists working in a publicly funded paediatric therapy position. Funds were available to recent graduates, or to therapists who had recently entered paediatric practice from a different area of specialization. From April 2008 to January 2009 this fund provided more than \$11,000 to 38 therapists to support paediatric related continuing education. Funds from a 2006 OTO to target continuing education were utilized to finance the New Grad initiative.
- Attended the UBC therapy programs job fair in May, 2008. The Office of the PPTC was successful in lobbying UBC OT and PT to invite the SLP grads to the job fair as well.
- Attended the UBC OT 'Capstone Conference' to recruit and network with graduating OT's
- Meeting and ongoing communications with Valter Ciocca, director of the UBC Speech program regarding support for paediatric placements and an increase in training seats

- Placed advertisement of the therapybc site on the UofAlberta job posting board
- Presented to 31 UBC OT students September 18th regarding a career in paed
- Attended the UofAlberta Health Sciences Career Fair in October '08
- Presented to 19 UBC SLP students regarding a career in paed
- Worked in conjunction with the Paediatric SLP council and UBC Speech to develop an online survey to investigate barriers to SLP's supervising students interested in paediatric placements. Will use the results of this survey to assist the UBC SLP program in recruiting more clinical placement opportunities.

3. Improve retention of therapists working in paediatric settings

Activities and Achievements

- Presented May 7th at BCACDI meeting to update agencies/employers on new developments and initiatives designed to retain therapists
- Operated 'Education Grant Awards' initiative that provided \$17,200 in the form of 30 bursaries to support paediatric specific continuing education opportunities. 2 OTs, 2 PTs, and 2 SLPs from each of the 5 BC health areas (north, interior, island, fraser, Vancouver-coastal) received funding via a lottery system to apply towards a paediatric specific continuing education opportunity. The amount of funds received depended on the region the therapist was from to reflect the different costs of accessing continuing education from the various areas of BC.
- Assisted in the planning and delivery of the 2009 Paediatric Update Symposium in Burnaby February 27th and 28th. This continuing education opportunity featured renowned speakers from OT, PT, and SLP. The theme of the conference was 'participation,' and the conference also featured poster presentations of research and innovative practice from BC's paediatric therapy community. The Symposium was attended by more than 225 therapists, and segments of the conference were captured electronically and will be posted on the therapybc website for therapists and other stakeholders who were unable to attend.
- Assisted in the planning and delivery of the Interior regional education session in Kamloops February 19th and 20th. This session brought together 57 therapists (OT, PT, and SLP) from across the Interior health area. 79% of participants were 'very satisfied' with the interdisciplinary format of the session. Sample comments from the evaluation forms included "Reinforces team approach and overlap between disciplines, and benefits children in many settings," and "As a SLP it was nice to hear and get the same information as the OT/PT so we can have the same point of reference when working with the same kids."
- Assisted in the planning of the North regional education session in Prince George October 31st and November 1st.
- Met with the MoH librarian regarding access to the MoH online database to improve access to research and literature for therapists working at agencies contracted by MCFD to provide therapy services.

- Surveyed therapists who received funding for continuing education through the Office of the PPTC. Utilized results of this survey to form memo for employers to inform them of survey results to assist in their retention efforts.
- Utilized funds earmarked for 'eLearning' to support therapists using technology to access continuing education opportunities. Also, using portion of these funds to electronically capture regional workshops and other education sessions with the intent to place them on the therapybc site.

4. Disseminate the action plan for phase 1 recommendations, and the caseload guidelines generated by phase 2 of the Promoting Manageable Workloads project. Support employers, therapists, and funding sources in implementing/responding to these guidelines. Explore the feasibility of a provincial standardized process for agencies to measure/track waitlists

Activities and Achievements

- Developed the PMW phase 2 document: Preferred Practice Guidelines for BC Paediatric Therapists. This document provides stakeholders in the delivery of paediatric therapy services in BC with caseload guidelines intended to support manageable workloads for therapists. The document also includes strategies to assist employers and therapists when faced with caseloads above the suggested guidelines.
- Disseminated the PMW phase 2 document, Preferred Practice Guidelines for Therapists for BC Paediatric Therapists, to Ministry of Health Prevention Managers, Ministry of Education School District Directors of Student Support Services (via the provincial office), Provincial and Regional MCFD Managers and Directors, Provincial Paediatric Therapy Councils, and paediatric therapists. The document is posted on the therapybc website.
- Phase 1 recommendations action plan document discusses the recommendations and subsequent action plan developed from the work of phase 1 of the Promoting Manageable Workloads project. This document is also posted on therapybc.
- Contracted with Alison Stewart to initiate the eLibrary project, an initiative supported by the phase 1 recommendations to assist employers and therapists with referral management processes. The first phase of this project involves the posting of referral management strategies that can be utilized by agencies seeking to improve the efficiency of their referral management systems. Ongoing work will include other tools with the focus on improving accessibility to strategies to support agencies and therapists looking to improve the efficiency of their current workplace systems.
- Networking with therapists and administrators informally to explore the feasibility of a provincial standardized process for agencies to measure waitlists.

5. Continue to support agencies and therapists choosing to implement the use of therapist assistants into their service delivery model. Provide profiles with practical examples of successful models already in use in BC

Activities and Achievements

- Initiated 'Practice Profile' project. This project invited agencies currently successfully utilizing therapist assistants to enhance the delivery of paediatric therapy services to create a document to be shared with other agencies. The intent was to provide practical examples of successful models that could be adapted by other agencies still unsure how to incorporate therapist assistants into their service delivery model.
- Contracted with 5 agencies to participate in the Practice Profile project.
- Ongoing communication with the 5 agencies regarding format and content of Practice Profiles.
- All 5 agencies completed Practice Profiles by the deadline, and these documents are now available on the therapybc website. Their availability advertised via the PPTC Quarterly Reports. One of these Practice Profiles documents was included as a poster presentation at the Paediatric Update Symposium that took place in Vancouver February 27th and 28th.

6. Develop effective communication and networking opportunities throughout British Columbia for paediatric therapists. Deliver professional development opportunities in all 5 provincial regions.

Activities and Achievements

The following communication and networking opportunities received funding and organizational support from the Office of the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant during the 08/09 fiscal year:

- Island education session and networking opportunity April 21st '08 in Nanaimo
- North education session and networking opportunities May 23/24th '08 in Smithers, and October 31 '08 in Prince George (further details described under Objective #3).
- Interior education session and networking opportunity February 18/19th '09 in Kamloops, BC (further details described under Objective #3).
- Fraser, Vancouver-Coastal, and all other regions education session and networking opportunity February 27/28th '09 in Vancouver, BC (Paediatric Update Symposium).
- Additional funds earmarked for the Island utilized to support travel of Island therapists to Paediatric Update Symposium in Vancouver February '09.

7. Support a comprehensive provincial mentoring strategy for therapists by utilizing professional expertise within this province.

Activities and Achievements

- Utilized portion of funds from PPTC budget to support a pilot project of online eMentor training modules. Selected 5 therapists (each region of BC and each of the three professions represented) to go through the process of 4 online learning modules designed to teach them to be an effective eMentor. Author of the modules was then able to revise and modify the modules according to the feedback received from this pilot. The end result is that BC paediatric therapists and agencies now have a formal, structured eMentoring program developed and ready for implementation. Will put forward a proposal to support several eMentor relationships across BC.

8. Link with Aboriginal resources to enhance the delivery of service to First Nations communities

Activities and Achievements

- Meeting and ongoing communications with James Coble, Aboriginal Services Coordinator at Okanagan College in Kelowna, BC regarding how to engage aboriginal students in therapy related education programs. Mr. Coble utilized his list serve of other aboriginal services coordinators to share my role in the province with the rest of his colleagues
- Attended and presented on the recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists at the Aboriginal IDP conference in Chase, BC on April 8th
- In collaboration with VIHA, MCFD CSM for Comox/Courtenay, MCFD CYSN representative for Vancouver Island (Julia Rose), developed and provided financial support for a pilot project. This pilot project involves the training of an aboriginal community member from the West coast of the Island to act as a speech therapy assistant. This aboriginal community member will be able to support and implement appropriate speech therapy related activities in 5 aboriginal communities along the west coast of the Island. Assessment, intervention planning, training, and supervision provided by the VIHA SLP currently providing outreach to those areas. At the conclusion of the pilot, the group will provide a 'Practice Profile' document for the therapybc website to share their experience.
- Developed a recruitment poster outlining several career training opportunities in the paediatric therapy services sector. This poster targets aboriginal students.

- Implemented an 'Aboriginal Resources' menu on the therapybc website. Provides links and access to aboriginal specific resources useful for stakeholders delivering therapy services.
- Have committed to participating in a career fair for aboriginal students taking place in Kelowna at UBC Okanagan in May 2009.

9. Ensure timely communication of information between the Provincial Consultant and the Provincial Steering Committee, and other relevant parties.

Activities and Achievements

- Monthly reports submitted to the Sharepoint site, and available to the Provincial Steering Committee
- Monthly teleconferences with the Provincial Steering Committee
- Monthly teleconferences with the Provincial Therapy Councils
- Initiated a quarterly report. Now disseminate a quarterly report to MCFD provincial and regional staff, Ministry of Education provincial staff (to be filtered to each school district through their provincial system), BC Health Authority Prevention Managers, provincial paediatric therapy councils, BCACDI and employers, Susan Illmayer (Ministry of Health Program Manager - Therapy Professions, Health Human Resources Planning), and paediatric therapists registered with the therapybc mailing list. This report outlines projects and initiatives currently being supported through the PPTC Office.

Planned Initiatives for 2009-2010

The current fiscal climate brings a unique set of challenges for the Office of the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant. With limited resources, the Office will continue to work on initiatives to assist in the recruitment and retention of BC paediatric therapists. These initiatives will include further continuing education and networking support, continued expansion of the therapybc website as a resource to both employers and therapists, ongoing work towards promoting manageable workloads, and other recruitment and retention initiatives.

1. Continuing Education and Networking

- Survey results continually demonstrate the importance of continuing education and networking opportunities in retaining paediatric therapists; however, with limited funding in the upcoming year the PPTC will have to focus on innovative and cost-effective strategies to provide such opportunities. The PPTC will work on improving accessibility of online and other technological methods of accessing continuing education for paediatric therapists, and other education and networking opportunities will likely consist of smaller groups of local therapists performing case studies and review as opposed to bringing in expensive guest speakers. The PPTC will also investigate the capacity for agencies and employers to participate in such events via videoconferencing. Continued support of a provincial mentoring program is also vital. We are entering an era that will see a wealth of experienced paediatric therapists retire, and a provincial mentoring program will help ensure this experience is passed on to less experienced therapists and/or therapists working in clinically isolated communities. The eMentoring program developed by Sue Stewart and Sunny Hill Health Centre holds huge promise in fulfilling this need, and the PPTC will continue collaboration with Sue and Sunny Hill to develop an implementation plan for this program.

2. Continued Expansion and Development of www.therapybc.ca

- The past year has seen significant growth in the amount of online traffic generated by the therapybc website. Software has been utilized to monitor the amount and nature of traffic, and this data will be utilized to develop a cost-effective strategy to continue to effectively promote the website. In addition, other methods of accessing the student population will be explored to ensure that therapy students from across Canada are aware of the site.

3. Promoting Manageable Workloads

- Continued work towards manageable workloads is a vital component of an effective retention program. The last year was seminal in that it saw the production of the Preferred Practice Guidelines document, an important resource for all stakeholders in paediatric therapy service delivery. The Office of the PPTC will continue to be involved in caseload/workload guideline projects. Examples include being an agency sponsor for a UBC Online Master's degree project that is working on a points based caseload system for paediatric therapists, and communication and collaboration with the three therapy national professional organizations that have recently announced their intention to work together on a caseload guidelines initiative.

4. Other recruitment/retention initiatives

- The Office of the PPTC will continue to work with the Ministry of Health, Education, and Advanced Education to ensure paediatric therapy has a voice in all recruitment and retention strategies being developed and supported with public dollars. One such example is continued participation in the 'BC Rehab Leader's Group,' an initiative started by the 6 BC Health Authorities, that is working on a combined approach to recruitment and retention of rehabilitation professionals. The Office of the PPTC will also continue to explore the recruitment of internationally educated therapists, and how it may be able to serve a role in facilitating international therapists' quest for employment in BC.

Recommended Strategic Initiatives for Ministry of Children and Family Development 2009-2010

The Ministry of Children and Family Development can support the recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists by championing the following initiatives:

- 1) Implement a funding allocation model for therapy resources that is sensitive to population characteristics of the diverse regions and communities of British Columbia
- 2) Support coordinated implementation of a wage scale that acknowledges the education, experience, and demand of paediatric therapists across employment sectors, with the goal of alleviating some current challenges with hard-to-fill vacancies. This initiative will require collaboration amongst the Public Sector Employer's Council, employers, therapists, union bargaining representatives, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health, in order to be successful. Current wage discrepancies between different unions and different Ministries place some employers at a disadvantage when recruiting therapists.
- 3) Support the caseload guidelines made in phase 2 of the Promoting Manageable Workloads project
- 4) Support a provincial plan to increase the number of student seats for SLP students
- 5) Support the OTO proposals submitted for the 2009-2010 fiscal year:
 - eMentoring project: a formalized and guided mentor program linking experienced therapists with new grads or therapists new to paediatrics
 - Paediatric Primer: an online continuing education module designed to deliver the latest in paediatric therapy knowledge and innovations. Also includes a two-week practicum opportunity at a tertiary centre or large CDC

Closing Remarks

2008-2009 was a productive year for the Office of the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant. Through the commitment and hard work of the Steering Committee, we were able to accomplish the vast majority of work plan objectives. Visibility across the BC rehabilitation sector continues to increase as more and more stakeholders recognize the value of the recruitment and retention initiatives implemented by the Office. I would like to recognize the ongoing commitment and contributions of the Steering Committee for the Office of the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant. The Steering Committee's dedication to children's therapy services in BC ensure that the initiatives and projects supported by the Office are successful. Steering Committee members:

- Shirley Meaning, MCFD Provincial Therapies Manager
 - Susan Stacey, OT, steering committee chair 08/09
 - Janice Duivesteyn, OT
 - Lianne Matsuo, SLP
 - Jenny Zoia, SLP
 - Nancy Corrin, PT
 - Donna Sims, PT
- members leaving in 08/09 include Anne Rankin, and Christie Diamond

It continues to be a very rewarding experience fulfilling the role of the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Consultant. The level of dedication, knowledge, and expertise demonstrated by the therapists of this province is truly inspiring. I look forward to continuing in my role as the PPTC, and to further improving the recruitment and retention of therapists to BC agencies providing paediatric therapy services