

Attachment # 1
Letter for Support



New West Family Place

History of the organisation

New West Family Place has been a **second home to families in New West** for over 30 years. They offer drop in programs, workshops and parenting groups for all families to find support, strengthen their relationships with their children and their family members, enhance how they feel about their parenting, and build community connection and belonging. Family Place exists so that families in New West can be empowered to THRIVE!

Offered via a well-established Family Resource Program model, our programs encompass all five core areas of service set out by the BC Association of Family Resource Programs (FRPBC): **family support, play-based learning, early learning and literacy, parent education and learning, and information and referrals.**

The programs and services currently offered act as barrier-free access points for families to find support, strengthen parent-child relationships, enhance their feeling of parental efficacy, and build community connections and belonging. Programs are offered in consistent locations across the community – touching every neighborhood - and at consistent times. Staff provide services and supports in multiple languages and work collaboratively to ensure families are connected to the services and supports they need when they need them.

VISION: Family Place envisions an inter-connected, inclusive community where all families are valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

MISSION: Family Place builds bridges between families and between families and the community by providing resources and programming that supports children and their caregivers.

VALUES

Love	Love is the foundation of our work. We aim to create spaces where caregivers, parents, and children are truly welcomed, accepted, and cared for.
Community	We believe in the power of connection and community. We strive to build an inclusive community in our spaces, while also connecting families to the community-at-large.
Growth	We know that growth happens in indirect ways and different directions and we honour each individual journey. We support families to find resources to develop the skills they need to grow while committing to remaining reflexive in our own work in order to expand our own skills and do our work better each day.
Integrity	Our actions embody our values and principles and we have the courage to stand up for what we believe is right.

Celebration	We are proud of the achievements of our families, the team, and the community and we take time to celebrate with each other. We bring joy and fun into everything we do!
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PRINCIPLES: Equity | Inclusiveness | Climate Conscious

New West Family Place Overview

- *Why the Early Years?* The government focus on child care has turned the laser focus to early child development and the incredible importance of children's earliest experiences. From the prenatal period until about age 3, children are most profoundly influenced within their intimate family environments and through interaction with primary caregivers. In the preschool years, family factors continue to impact child development while influences outside the family begin to play a greater role. The groundwork for lifelong health, learning and well-being is formulated through these early experiences. Since the foundation that supports children's lifelong learning is established very early, services and programs for families during the period from conception to school entry are vitally important. Child outcomes will be enhanced if all families have access to an adequate array of supports during this critical time. Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs (2011). *Family is the Foundation: Why Family Support and Early Childhood Education Must Be a Collaborative Effort*. [Policy Paper](#).
- *Why Family Place?* Family Place provides the essential services and resources to help families to thrive. These include: pre- and post-natal programs; referrals and supports for necessities such as food and housing; mental health services such as 1:1 family support and navigation and parent support groups; breastfeeding support; dental health and access to care; play groups; family literacy programs; parent education workshops on baby and family life fundamentals, settlement supports for newcomer families; access to early identification and programming for developmental delays and support early identification of speech and language problems.
 - As of December 2022, Family Place offers weekly: 25 hours of drop in early childhood development family support programming, a food program, 1 hour of baby support and early literacy, 2 hours of Spanish parent support circle, 2 hours of Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program, 2 hours of family literacy programming, 25+ hours/week of one-to-one support + monthly community events (i.e. Winter Solstice with the City of New West and Arts Council) and monthly parenting workshops
 - Family Place has had to pivot to providing 100s of hours of **one-to-one support for families** including mental health supports, parent coaching, food hampers, donations distribution, form fill out, navigation to the many community support resources that can be difficult for people to access. Referrals have also skyrocketed with the pandemic – the staff are doing more than 100 supported referrals each month to other community resources.
 - Family Place is **getting into people's homes** by providing a toy lending library in partnership with the New West Public Library, Family Place provides the toys and the structure and the library is the pick up and drop off point. They are also doing monthly FREE Family Fun Packs – 100s of early childhood development play packs distributed to families with the local community centre being the pick up and drop off point. Each week families are encouraged to get outside to search for the weekly handmade fairy

house at a spot in Queen's Park for families, and a outdoor green space guide for family friendly spots around New West.

- Family Place has a small but mighty team of 7 people including child development and family support experts that provide services and supports in multiple languages and work with families to ensure they are supported and connected with services and supports they need when they need them.

COVID -19 and Early Childhood Development

Health Canada commissioned a [research and policy brief](#) to advise decision makers on the mental health needs of children and caregivers in the wake of COVID-19. The policy brief outlined the key findings of the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on new and expectant parents and how we can support infants, young children, and their families and their needs. ¹ At New West Family Place we have experienced the front line of people whose mental health needs have been dramatically and sometimes catastrophically impacted by the isolation and vulnerabilities from COVID-19 restrictions. We have also learned that the greatest asset we have in decreasing vulnerabilities and increasing strength and resilience around mental health is the human beings who work front-line and directly with families. Our programming is desperately oversubscribed and the demand is increasing for the provision of universally available, drop in, early childhood development programming that is high quality, culturally safe and focused on the needs of children, parents and caregivers. The [evidence in the wake of COVID-19](#) is clear that these people working in these programs, the human resources are the ones that can provide the increased social, emotion and tangible supports that children and families need in the wake of this unprecedented experience.

Current Priority Areas and Demands

The biggest demand is for mental health supports and navigation through the many programs that are available for families

- Parents are struggling with their children and the trauma the isolation of the pandemic. They need that one-to-one support
- Pandemic related intimate partner abuse and child abuse is escalating including the fear-based control of where and when women and children are allowed to leave the house. They need that one-to-one support
- Pandemic related economic hardship – losing jobs, losing security, not wanting to put your child in childcare so needing to quit your job. Women are the most impacted here. They need that one-to-one support

For more information:

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¹ Mental Health Commission of Canada. (2021). *COVID-19 and early childhood mental health: Fostering systems change and resilience — Policy brief*. Ottawa, Canada: Mental Health Commission of Canada.
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