

AHTF Maternal Child Health Initiative Enhanced Families First Program

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How It Began



- The Families First Program is a strength based, prevention and intervention approach, similar to the successful provincial KidsFirst Program. It was decided to aim support at families (prenatal with children up to age five) that reside within the community of Kamsack and surrounding rural municipalities.

The Joint Families First Advisory Board and Maternal Child Health Initiative Steering Committee Members

- Regional KidsFirst Community Developer
- FASD/Maternal Child Coordinator for YTC
- VP of Community Services - SHR
- Keeseekoose First Nation
- Victoria School teacher representation
- SHR Mental Health and Addictions representation
- R.C.M.P. representation
- Director of Primary Health Care – SHR
- KidsFirst Yorkton
- Superintendent of Program Development – GSSD
- Public Health –SHR
- Director of Health Services North – SHR
- Yorkton Tribal Council representation

Families

- **As of February 2010 there are 25 families in the Families First Program.**
- 14 families are self declared First Nation people
- 3 families are self declared Metis
- 3 families are English as an Additional Language
- 5 families are non First Nation or have not declared their ethnicity
- In total, 98 individuals benefit from their participation with the program (caregivers, siblings and child)
- Regardless of the family, staff strive to support all individuals with a positive, strength based approach that respects each family's culture, beliefs and goals.

Strengths

- The official start date for the AHTF Enhanced Families First Program Maternal Child Health Initiative was September 1st 2008.
- This funding has allowed for many enhancements and improvements within the Families First Program.
- There have been many positive activities for the families that participate, as well as the community of Kamsack as a whole.



Strengths

- A strong home visiting team that is familiar with the community as well as the diverse families who reside here .
- Home visitors have developed skills in non typical program delivery and often connect with families with an “outside the box” home visiting style.
- The Program Coordinator is noticing an increase in families resourcing their own supports; families are demonstrating self esteem and excitement for their future.



Strengths

- The Families First Program has developed and maintained community partnerships that have strengthened over the past year
- The referrals both to and from SHR Mental Health and Addictions has increased dramatically. This agreement between the two programs has benefitted the entire Families First Program.

Strengths

- Home visitors support families with transportation to and from appointments (when required), assist with prioritizing a family's daily commitments so they can attend their appointment as well as working with the Mental Health worker to encourage future appointment attendance.
- *Referrals indicate the positive credibility the program and staff have strived for; families feel secure in accessing additional community supports while community supports are aware of the program and encourage their clients to participate with recordable referrals.*

Strengths

- *Other referrals*
- 3 referrals to Sunrise Health Region Addictions
- Staff have referred **1** prenatal and **1** postpartum family to the SHR Lactation Consultant
- Assisted with **7** pre kindergarten registrations
- Cote CHN has referred **3** families that reside in Kamsack to the Families First Program
- Numerous verbal referrals and encouragements by home visitors to access SHR Public Health, Dental Health, Speech/Language services, Town of Kamsack resources etc.



The Enhanced Families First Program

- *Enhancements that have benefitted the entire program,*
- The relationship between MH/A's is much stronger today because of the AHTF involvement.
- Staff are trained in breastfeeding curriculum and feel confident in supporting families
- Breastfeeding incentives encourage families to role model for their friends/family members
- Resources, curriculum and program support available all clients
- Professional development opportunities that were not available pre AHTF
- Linkages between community and program that demonstrate community interest and support for the Families First Program
- New contacts with the Cote, Keeseekoose and Key First Nation that were not available before

Challenges



- Maintaining a fully staffed program has always been a difficult struggle for the Families First Program.
- The Program Coordinator has continued to post positions for the AHTF home visitor; word of mouth advertising through the Supporting Wings Program has encouraged interest but there have been no appropriate candidates as of today.

Challenges

- *Elder/Parent Mentor Position*
- Due to the Parent Mentor's resignation, this position has been vacant since June 2009.
- This position is difficult to fill as the expectations are varied day to day. Families are often hesitant to access this project when they have already developed a strong home visiting support. Community suggestion should be respected when dealing with this position.
- Suggestions include partnering with the Supporting Wings Program
 - staff share position
 - and/or revisit the Elder component (with their assistance and recommendations)