



# The Child in the City

University of Toronto  
158 St. George Street  
Toronto, Ont. M5S 2V8  
978-6895

Each facility would include:

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- 1) Drop-in - aimed at parents (stay-at-home and working parents) and family day care providers

Judge George M. Thomson  
Associate Deputy Minister  
Child and Youth Services  
Minister of Community and Social Services  
3rd Floor  
Hepburn Block  
Queen's Park, M7A 1E8

Dear Judge Thomson;

I am writing to you to outline the progress that we at Child in the City are making towards a proposal in the area we are calling "Support for Parenting". As Saul Levine indicated to you in his letter of October 24, we see this as having important service and preventative possibilities and would like to demonstrate these possibilities by rigorous evaluation. Additionally, we see the opportunity to provide a setting for research in related areas.

We are now working towards a cooperative effort among Child in the City, Cradleship Creche Day Care (an agency providing both group day care and care in supervised family day care homes), and Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre (a community-based group now providing supports for parents in the Jane/Finch area). The precise nature of our relationship in this project is one on which we are now working; however, we all feel that mutual benefit would be derived from a cooperation.

## Proposed Plan for the Project

The project would have two thrusts:

1. Development and evaluation of a service supporting parents and family day care providers in a variety of ways.
2. Opportunities for researchers to investigate a variety of aspects of the service.



We see more than one facility, or centre, in order to enhance efforts in research and evaluation by increasing the size of our populations, providing comparisons among neighborhoods, and allowing for "purer" research possibilities, as well as a chance to provide the service to a larger number of people.

Each facility would include:

- a) Drop-in - aimed at parents (stay-at-home and working parents) and family day care providers
  - offering an opportunity for users to meet others in community, ask questions, and get information and resources
  - a play room for children, providing a chance for children to be with others and short-term babysitting for emergencies or on appointment
  - a babysitting and day care registry for longer term child care
  - users would be encouraged to develop mutual support relationships for child care.

The relationship of the users to the drop-in would be an important one. The drop in staff would need to be sensitive to peoples' needs, be non-evaluative and committed to a community development model. We would make clear to the users what we offer and what the boundaries are (for example, we would not accept a child for daily babysitting but would help the parent make other arrangements), and we would attempt to encourage users to accept roles involving more or less responsibility (for example, holding someone else's baby so that she could talk to staff, or encouraging a user with a special skill to teach it to others).

- b) Structured play groups and parenting discussion groups

- we would offer, as one of our resources, a number of ongoing groups where day care providers and parents could work with their own and other children, to learn from an early childhood specialist and from each other by modelling, to observe children and adults in the group, and to discuss what they have learned. We would attempt to facilitate mutual support networks which would develop from these groups.



## c) Community outreach

based on a network model, using people in the neighborhood to bring in friends and neighbors. We assume that if we make contact with "lay" or central people in the community, and provide a good service, that we will be successful in developing a user population. In addition, we would enhance our visibility by, first, locating in a visible, accessible place, by being open during hours when a range of people could see our centre (for example, if we were located in a shopping plaza, we would be open Friday nights), and by providing a variety of special interest activities, including workshops, children's entertainment and special activity groups (crafts and other skill groups). We would encourage users to be as involved in these things as much as possible.

We assume that some users would only come to the drop-in and have their needs met there. It would be a place to meet others, a place for children to be with other children, to get information about day care, children's programs, nutrition, health services, reassurance about development, and so on. Other users might indicate that they would like to be more involved in a group to learn parenting skills; still others might take an even more active role in working with people to bring them to the service or to pass their skills on.

Although the three cooperating groups come from different directions in working with people, we all see family day care providers and parents caring for their own children as needing the same kinds of resources and experiences, and see the need to integrate day care provision into the community in a way that has not previously been done. As the need for good quality day care seems not to be diminishing, and as diminishing social service funding indicates that we need to look at alternative ways of providing good quality day care services, we see a need to evaluate the usefulness of a community-based program such as the one I am discussing.

I have undertaken a literature search to support my forthcoming proposal. My reading indicates that different parts of this project have been undertaken in a number of places; however, evaluation has been scanty and non-rigorous. We expect to look at a number of areas in our research and evaluation, including the development of competence and self-esteem in users, the development of parenting skills and improvement in quality of day care, the use of neighborhood networks as support systems and the role of professionals in community networks (the last to be undertaken by a researcher from the Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, with a separate application for funding).



4....

We expect to have our proposal to you in early January. We would be most appreciative of any information or directions that you can see would be useful to us at this stage, or any specific guideline of which we should be aware.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours truly,

Martha Friendly  
Research Associate

/gwb