

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1996 Annual General meeting was eventually held at the Aphasia Centre on November 23. The guest speaker was Marlene Stein, from the Ministry of Health, Public Health Branch, who updated members on the new preschool speech and language funding.

Copies of the planning guidelines were shared, and Marlene reported that all District Health Councils have to submit an Environmental Scan by December 31, 1996 and a Service System Plan by April 1, 1997. The Guidelines have prescribed the elements to be included in the environmental scan (review of the existing services and needs) as well as the stakeholders to be included in the planning process. Parents are expected to take part in the identification of local needs and provide advice on the new service system. (See page 2 for more details of preschool speech and language service system)

OAFCCD members are very excited about the new funding for preschool speech and language services. Parent volunteers are participating in District Health Council planning efforts across the province, and the results of a member survey on preschool speech and language services has been shared with all District health Councils. However, we are very concerned that new funds and new services will still not be in place by the summer. This means, that a year after the governments' announcement, many children will prepare to enter school without having had the benefits of speech and language services.

PRESCHOOL DOLLARS - WHEN WILL WE SEE NEW SERVICES?

It has already been eight months since the May Budget announcement of new dollars for preschool speech and language services and to date we have not seen any new services anywhere. This has many parent feeling frustrated, especially in areas which were hard hit by service cuts or reductions in 1996.

The only consolation that can be offered to parents is that the funding initiative is being used to force the forging of the existing patchwork of services into a comprehensive service system. In addition, the new system increases the accountability of individual service agencies to the whole system. This should mean the end of comments such as "your child doesn't meet our criteria" and "not my mandate" and generate more positive support and accurate referrals to the right agency.

Accountability is also a responsibility of parents and OAFCCD members. It is the consumers who will provide the information on whether the new system achieves the goal of improved services, and effective early identification and intervention. As an organization we have a responsibility to support this new initiative, but we must also be accountable to our members. This means that we must keep the pressure on the government to implement enhanced services as soon as possible. We will be watching to see how quickly the new funds flow and pressuring our elected representatives if we don't see services soon.

In addition, limited new funds for preschool children will not end OAFCCD efforts to ensure that all school age children also have access to the speech and language services they need.

Preschool Service System

"Planning Guidelines for Development of a Speech and Language System for Preschool Children" The preschool speech and language service system elements to be available in all communities include:

- **Public Awareness** - awareness activities to emphasize the importance of communication development, and alert parents and caregivers about when they should be concerned, and where they can go for help.
- **Parent Support** - targeted at parents of children at risk for communication disorders as well as parents of identified children. The use of Hanen and other parent training programs to be promoted.
- **Early identification** - identification of children as early as possible, to provide a longer period to prepare children for school entry, and reduce the long term impact of communication disorders,
- **Simple and Easy Access** - everyone should know where to go, and there should be co-ordinated access. This does not necessarily mean one point of entry into the system, but does mean that there is only one system to enter.
- **Common intake** - this is a provider issue, but means that parents do not need to have their children on multiple waiting lists.
- **Assessments** - it is important to avoid duplicate and multiple assessments. Good inter-agency communication is essential.
- **Range of interventions** - One - on - one, direct therapy, group therapy, mediated or consultative services are all required depending on the age and the disorder of the child.
- **Transition planning** - there needs to be improved transition planning, especially when children start school. It is important that children not move to another waiting list for another assessment

Parent Tips

Chapter Leaders were invited to a special Leadership Workshop on the morning of the Annual General Meeting. Chapter Leaders were able to share information on local needs, and learn new ideas for membership recruitment and effective local advocacy. The workshop and the Annual Meeting provided an opportunity for parents to meet and share ideas. Some of the parent tips for other OAFCCD members include:

1. Prepare a written "profile" of your child to take to meetings with school staff or agency case conferences. The profile can include the names and job titles of professional and support staff; a description of the child's strengths and hopes, as well as parent concerns; and a list of ideas to make it easier for the child to be understood, and to learn.
2. Educate your friends and relations about communication disorders. Most people do not know very much about the impacts of speech and language disorders, or about the effectiveness of treatment. As taxpayers, your friends can help to advocate for publicly funded services.
3. Share your story with elected representatives, Board members and Trustees. These people are decision makers and it is by hearing your story that they will understand the importance of speech and language services.
4. Talk to each other and listen to each other. Many parents report that they feel better when they share their feelings and find out that someone else has had the same experience and feelings.
5. Help OAFCCD to grow! This is your organization and we need your help to organize meetings, recruit new members, advocate for services, and help other families.

APHASIA

Coming Events:

New OAFCCD Chapter Meetings are planned for:

Upcoming Conferences

Work and Learning can be Fun and Play

- Games for Kids with Communication Disorders

AGE 3 + up:

Things in my house (an easy lotto like game)

AGE 5 + up:

First Lotto (a memory game) by Galt toys

AGE 6 + up:

Secret Forest (card game for points) by Galt toys or

Enchanted Forest by Ravensburger

AGE 7 + up:

Guess Who (ask questions to find mystery player)

Top Story (teaches sentence structure)

AGE 8 + up:

Outburst Junior (mystery cards used with dictionary)

Computer Games:

CD ROM - *Richard Scary or Little Critter Books, Bailey's Book House*

Walmart - *Silly Crazy Wacky Sentences*

IKEA - *People Lotto*

Many of these games are available at Moyers or good toy stores.

Attention!!
Chapter Leaders/Contacts

Next Board Meeting February 1, 1997 in Tillsonburg at the 13 Segal Drive.. Call Sharen if you can attend and for directions.

1997 Membership Fees Due NOW!!

Membership Fees and donations are currently our only source of operating funds. Your Membership Fees are very important to us and we need you to send your membership fees as soon as possible. If you have not yet joined, please do so as soon as possible. The Annual Membership Fee is only fifteen dollars (\$5 of which goes to the local Chapter) so please pay today!!!

NOTE: Fees will be waived upon request.

Please complete and send the attached notice to make sure that your membership information is correct. Return to: OAFCCD, Sharen Heath, 13 Segal Dr., Tillsonburg, Ont., N4G 4P4

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ **Phone:**() _____

Parent: ____ **Professional:** ____

New Member: ____ **Renewal:** ____

Don't forget to enclose \$15.00 Annual Membership Fee with your form.