

# SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK BE BACK SOON

Connections Early Years Family Centre  
Windsor, ON

**Area of Practice:**  
Services and Supports for Vulnerable Immigrant Groups

**Video:**  
<https://youtu.be/yLABGVdtrgg>

A Pathways to  
Prosperity Project

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**PATHWAYS TO  
PROSPERITY**  
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada



**VOIES VERS LA  
PROSPÉRITÉ**  
Promouvoir des communautés accueillantes au Canada

## **BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM**

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Connections Early Years Family Centre (formerly St. Mary's Family Learning Centre) is a non-profit agency based in Windsor, ON. Founded in 1974, it provides integrated support, learning and early identification and intervention services to advance the healthy development of families and their children aged 0-6 years in Windsor-Essex County. It offers a variety of free services, such as speech and language programs, literacy / numeracy programs, infant hearing programs, blind-low vision early intervention programs, parenting support, pre- and post-natal programs, play sessions, and dads' groups.

Be Back Soon was created in 2005 to address the need for short-term, no-cost, occasional, quality childcare options for families with low income to attend medical, legal, social service or counseling appointments, job interviews, and/or workshops.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM**

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**Name:**

Be Back Soon

**Description:**

The Be Back Soon program is an unlicensed, short-term childcare program for families living with low income. Eligibility is based on income levels set out by Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Offs (LICO). It provides parents who qualify with an opportunity to leave their children 0-6 years of age at the Connections Early Years Family Centre for a short period of time while they attend medical, legal, social service or counseling appointments, job interviews, or workshops. The childcare program is delivered by Registered Early Childhood Educators and supervised volunteers, who offer a safe, stimulating environment to enhance the play experience. Approximately 38% of current users are immigrants.

**Goal(s):**

The primary goal of the Be Back Soon program is to help families in Windsor-Essex County to transition out of poverty by providing free short-term childcare so that parents can attend to their employment, psychosocial, health, mental health, and/or legal needs. Other goals include developing new partnerships with similar service providers in order to support the Be Back Soon program in neighbourhoods where poverty is prevalent, as well as providing information, support and resources to families with young children living with low income, which intersect with the priorities identified by Pathway to Potential for Windsor-Essex County.

**Target Client Group(s):**

Families with young children living with low income

**Delivery Partner(s):**

N/A

**Human Resource(s):**

The Be Back Soon program is delivered by a team of three Registered Early Childhood Educators, as well as two to three volunteers who provide additional support when needed. The program can accommodate a maximum of five children at a time.

**Funding:**

The Be Back Soon program is funded by the City of Windsor through the Pathway to Potential Social Investment Plan.

**KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE**

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**Effective:**

The Be Back Soon program is delivered by Registered Early Childhood Educators, who are able to provide parents living with low income a practical, safe, short-term childcare solution to attend appointments, job interviews, and/or workshops, which in turn provide them with access to community supports and employment opportunities. Staff forge relationships with these families and provide them with a gateway to other services to support their family's healthy development.

**Efficient:**

Connections Early Years Family Centre is a multi-service agency that has the space and resources to deliver the Be Back Soon program, and to connect participants to other programs and services that support their integration into the community. Parents can schedule appointments in two-and-a-half-hour time blocks, with options available from Tuesday to Friday in the morning or afternoon.

**Relevant:**

The Be Back Soon program provides a practical solution to meet the short-term childcare needs of parents living with low income to attend appointments, such as English classes, driving lessons, employment services, social service appointments, job interviews, counselling, legal appointments, and medical appointments. It is centrally located along a transit line, providing easy access for participants. Entry is secured, and the program is delivered by professional staff who ensure that children feel safe and welcome and enjoy attending the program.

**Sustainable:**

Connections Early Years Family Centre continues to seek ongoing financial support to ensure that program costs (i.e., staffing, strategic advertising, outreach) are covered, as well as additional supports for pilot projects / research to raise awareness of the effectiveness of the program. At the same time, it is also involved in advocating for the need for flexible childcare arrangements that can be monitored and offer families with respite childcare. Childcare resources, such as toys and snacks, are provided by the centre.

**Transferable:**

The Be Back Soon program could be replicated by other organizations across Canada, provided that they are able to offer a comfortable, safe, and stimulating environment for young children, where they are cared for and their needs for play, snacks, and rest are met. The program should be delivered by Registered Early Childhood Educators.

**Innovative and Forward Thinking:**

The Be Back Soon program is unique because of its simplicity. It provides a very practical service that has far-reaching impact on the families who access the program.

**Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:**

The Be Back Soon program provides families with low income with no-cost childcare. It also focuses on forging relationships with families that are in survival mode to help them move from vulnerability to stability.

**High Client Uptake:**

The Be Back Soon program has high client uptake. Clients are recruited through advertisements on social media (Facebook and Kijiji) and in a local parenting magazine (Windsor Parent), as well as through posters and brochures that are distributed to other community service agencies, women's shelters, homeless shelters, libraries, and the bus station. Meetings and tours are also held with staff of other community agencies whose clients might benefit from the program.

**High Client Retention:**

Once a family signs up for the Be Back Soon program, they are able to access the program on an as-needed basis for one year. At the end of the year, the family's needs are reviewed; if access is still needed, and their income continues to fall within the LICO range, they are able to access the program for another year.

**Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:**

The Be Back Soon program monitors and tracks progress using different internal assessment and measurement tools. The data show that the program is creating positive outcomes for families with low income in Windsor-Essex County. For example, immigrant families have used the program to attend English classes, obtain a driver's licence, find permanent housing, and work on schooling, as well as while waiting for their childcare subsidy. In the most recent parent survey, conducted in July 2019, 92% of respondents rated the quality of the childcare program as excellent, and 100% of respondents indicated that their child enjoyed coming to the program. 6 out of 7 respondents whose child started a formal childcare arrangement found the Be Back Soon program helped their child with the transition. 67% of respondents reported that their financial status had improved as a result of the services provided through the Be Back Soon program. Close to half of respondents would not have been able to attend appointments if the Be Back Soon program was not available.

## **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY**

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The Be Back Soon program is monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. Both the initial data collection framework and indicators of success were developed by a data analyst with the City of Windsor in collaboration with Connections Early Years Family Centre staff to ensure they would meet the needs of the funder and service deliverer. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected through usage statistics (monthly), parent interviews (monthly), and parent surveys (bi-annually), and the information is compiled and reviewed on a quarterly basis. The information collected includes: the number of unique children and adults who used the program (new and ongoing); type of appointments attended; postal code (to map where families are living); mode of transportation used to attend the program; number of referrals provided to other services; and the number of parents who were able to access employment opportunities and promotions as a result.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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### **Connections Early Years Family Centre**

<https://connectwithus.ca>

### **Be Back Soon**

<https://connectwithus.ca/programs/bbs/>