Strategic Plan: The push for integration

With the Strategic Plan at top-of-mind, the focus is now on its goal of service integration – building a new model for service in which program barriers are eliminated.

Says President and CEO Bridget Fewtrell: “Every client should be able to access services as needed from our full basket of services, throughout his or her time with us.”

Input from all areas

To ensure staff participation from all areas, workshops are going ahead involving staff at all levels to exchange ideas about how to design and implement this new way of delivering service, adds Hakim Lakhani, VP Organizational Effectiveness. The implications of this approach go beyond ErinoakKids, because it doesn’t require that we provide all services ourselves. When a child needs a service we don’t provide directly, enhanced connections with our partner agencies should ensure that an ErinoakKids client can access the needed service seamlessly at a partner agency. “This will mean a truly integrated system of services for children locally at ErinoakKids, but it will also have broader applicability,” Bridget stresses. That’s why those workshops stressing consultation will continue, as Hakim mentioned in his first new Strategic Plan e-bulletin. And he adds: “We will eventually involve partners and families in our consultations too.”

It will take us a year

Bridget says it will take about a year to establish the new model, and then we can gain input from community partners, parents and families. We want to deliver integrated services cost-effectively, so that we can do more with less. “We want to serve more kids with the same resources, in these times of resource scarcity. We are looking forward to the next 12 months developing this, and there will be lots of opportunities for staff to learn about the model and provide input.”

With the new model comes a need for integrated infrastructure to deliver it, Bridget adds, that is, the nuts and bolts of our daily operations, such as intake, scheduling, data entry and health records. All are as vital to developing the new integrated service delivery system at the clinical end of things.
This spring marked my first anniversary as your President and CEO. It has been a remarkable year, marked by a sense of optimism, a theme of renewal, and many challenges. My admiration for the ErinoakKids staff cheers me constantly.

Early in ’08 the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) granted us $1-million to plan our redevelopment project. Now, after completing the Request for Proposals (RFP) process, I can tell you we’ve named Zeidler Partnership Architects as the successful firm to work with us to develop a business case for the new facility. With their help, we intend to make a complete and detailed proposal to the Ontario government in 2010. Meanwhile, the search for a site for a new facility begins.

Future in good hands

Another step forward took place when the Board approved the establishment of an ErinoakKids Foundation and named Anissa Hilborn to lead it. Anissa is committed to building our Foundation to support a capital campaign for our future endeavours. Our fundraising efforts could not be in better hands.

Changes in our sector and our organization required a renewed Strategic Plan, launched in 2008-9. With its emphasis on service integration, holistic care and efficient and effective use of resources, the Plan will let us fulfill our commitment to the children, come what may.

 Everywhere I look there’s progress. Over the past twelve months, Autism Intervention worked with MCYS to launch an enhanced model providing more service to more children with fewer resources. Additionally, in collaboration with the Peel District School Board, we established two specialized classrooms for children with autism.

As you read this, work continues on the ground-breaking ErinoakKids Functional Client Grouping Model for Children and Youth with Physical and Developmental Disabilities. This model, which was presented at the (Canadian) National Clinical Pathways Conference and the Ontario Association of Children’s Rehabilitation Services Conference, groups treatment needs across several dimensions. These are two of many advances on the client service front.

Progress on many fronts

On the organizational front, we’ve made many improvements to reduce costs and increase efficiencies. We joined a group purchasing initiative, brought payroll services in-house, and implemented an integrated HR/payroll system. We’re providing LEAN training to eliminate any duplication and waste in our processes.

So we accomplished a great deal together. And along with our many successes came challenges. ErinoakKids, like all organizations in our sector, received no sustainability funding again in this year’s provincial budget, and that’s having an impact. We met our legal obligation to achieve a balanced budget, but we had to forego salary adjustments, reduce staff positions and let maternity leaves remain unfilled for the coming fiscal year.

Must not forget the children

While acknowledging the difficult choices government must make, we cannot let them forget the needs of the children. Thus, our advocacy efforts, both to ensure continued commitment to the redevelopment project and to lobby with other CTC and community partners for sustainability funding in the next fiscal year, will continue with renewed vigour. I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to you all for your support, dedication and hard work.

We’ve come a long way in one year, and there’s much to accomplish in the next 12 months. With the talent and skill at ErinoakKids, I know we’re up to the challenges to come.
The Central West Infant Hearing Program is in a quiet corner of North Sheridan 1. It’s quiet because most of the work is happening out in the community. We know that early detection of hearing impairment leads to better outcomes, so we work with community partners to make services available more readily to parents throughout our service area. With a commitment to universal hearing screening and a large area to serve, it’s a way to do a better job for all those little ears.

50,000 little ears

More than 25,000 babies are born each year in the Central West region, and they’re all entitled to a hearing screening at one of 14 hospitals, eight midwifery practices or a dozen community clinics located throughout the region. We have one audiologist on staff, but we also have partnerships with half a dozen audiology practices in the community to be sure we can get the job done.

After their screening, some children are referred for additional testing or treatment. Others at risk for early childhood hearing loss are monitored, with regular assessments up to age three. If a child shows a permanent hearing loss, an ErinoakKids Family Support Worker, or one based at our partner agency, KidsAbility in Waterloo, meets with the family to provide information and support, and to discuss options.

Many partners available

Community partners can include an American Sign Language and Literacy Consultant, to work with the child and family to develop communication skills using sign language and help establish links with the deaf community. If an auditory verbal approach, to develop listening and speaking skills, is deemed best for the child, then the child and parents work with an auditory verbal therapist – again, based at ErinoakKids or KidsAbility – to develop early speech, language and emergent literacy skills. In either case the parents are our partners, too – they help select the best approach for their child.

HPPSLP guiding principle

Meanwhile, at the Halton-Peel Preschool Speech and Language Program, parent and community partners are also the key to good intervention outcomes. It’s a guiding principle that we help kids in natural learning environments, so HPPSLP establishes partnerships with community agencies serving parents and children in Halton-Peel.

Examples:

▲ HPPSLP has a longstanding partnership with early identification clinics in Halton and Peel – participating in 36 clinics last year – with a commitment to continue;

▲ HPPSLP offers speech-language pathology consultations in a number of Ontario Early Years Centres in Halton and Peel for families who have concerns about their child’s speech and language development;

▲ HPPSLP participates in Halton’s Community Intervention Program (CIP) to help children with special needs gain, improve or maintain skills they need to make the transition to an inclusive child care setting;
HPPSLP partners with several Ontario Early Years Centres in Halton and Peel to run ABC Talk with Me, a preschool language and literacy enrichment program designed for children 3 – 3 ½ years old, who have receptive and expressive language delays, and ABC Learn with Me, a program for Junior Kindergarten-age children that focuses on emergent literacy. Our partnerships in the community also offer continuing education and support for professionals:

- **Teacher Talk** is a three-day program offered through HPPSLP, which gives Early Childhood Education professionals the opportunity to learn to promote children’s language and early literacy development in early child care settings;
- **Sharing Sensitive News** offers information and strategies to child care professionals who must approach parents to discuss suspected problems or delays and the need for further investigation.

HPPSLP speech-language pathologists also work with developmental consultants with Infant Child Development Services in Halton and Peel concerning issues such as when to refer a child for speech and language intervention, the latest research on late talkers, HPPSLP clinical pathways, parent education workshops, and language facilitation strategies.

By working so much in the community, all these ErinoakKids programs not only let us accomplish more with the resources we have, but they also let us offer the help in places that are easy for parents to get to. Our community partners help us do more for the children, and that’s something we don’t intend to keep quiet.