

## Connecting community services to newcomers residing in Windsor Essex

The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership works with other community planning bodies to increase the profile of immigrant issues in Windsor Essex. In this way, the needs of immigrants are integrated into the broader community planning process as opposed to being marginalized in reports which identify 'the needs of immigrants'. Examples of these other bodies include the Windsor-Essex Children and Youth Planning Committee, Windsor Essex Youth Strategic Advisory Committee and Pathway to Potential.

As a direct result of this participation, WE LIP staff and council members meet with community stakeholders who provide services immigrants need but lack the direct connections to educate or inform newcomers about the services they provide. The WE LIP Council is a platform for those needed connections. The WE LIP welcomes council members and other community organizations to deliver information presentations at quarterly council meetings to facilitate partnership opportunities and increase access for newcomers and their families.

Recently, Terri Cooper a Program Manager at Connections Early Years Family Centre - Talk 2 Me Program approached the WE LIP to make a presentation at the May 2015 WE LIP Council meeting. Terri shared that as a direct result of working with the WE LIP at the Windsor-Essex Children and Youth Planning Committee table and learning more about the needs of immigrants, the Talk 2 Me program has recently initiated activities to engage with more immigrant families and is interested in working with WE LIP council members to support immigrant families.

Terri explained that the Connections Early Years Family Centre Talk 2 Me program is the local preschool speech and language program for Windsor-Essex County. They provide services for families with children from birth to the time they start school. Talk 2 Me staff can answer questions about a child's speech, language and emergent literacy development; give tips on what parents can do to help their child's oral language and literacy skills develop in their mother tongue; provide local assessment clinics where parents can meet and consult with a Speech-Language Pathologist; and provide individual speech therapy, group therapy, and parent education sessions.

Connections Early Years Family Centre also hosts the Infant Hearing Program and the Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program. The Infant Hearing Program includes universal newborn hearing screening, high risk monitoring and services for children identified with a permanent hearing loss. The Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program is designed to give children who are born blind or with low vision the best possible start in life. Specialized family-centred services are funded by the province and are available for children from birth to Grade 1.

At the end of Terri's presentation she shared her contact information and order forms for multilingual program brochures, communication milestone resources and information pamphlets. Terri is looking forward to working with the members of the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership Council to support more newcomer and immigrant families in Windsor Essex County.