



The Macaulay
Child Development
Centre

Macaulay Today

Winter 2016



1 Mental Health Matters

Macaulay fosters Infant Mental Health across the agency

“Every child deserves to have someone’s eyes light up when they enter the room.” ~ (Dr. Jean Clinton, specialist in child psychiatry)

Watch Macaulay staff in action and you will see their eyes light up as they welcome each young child into their program. Whether it’s a full day child care program, a half-day early years program or an hour’s home visit, the child is at the centre. That’s because we know that these early months and years are crucial for building brain pathways and fostering healthy social-emotional development.

Babies are born “relationship ready,” and it is the relationship with the primary caregiver that is most important. Research now tells us that if it’s not there, neurological development is compromised.

When a responsive relationship is in place, we see infants and young children who can express emotions, engage with others and explore their environment. Infants with positive mental health are free to learn and grow, grounded in a sense of security and self-esteem.

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2 Dear Friends

The early years matter. In fact, the more we learn about the human brain and early child development, the more we understand how critically important the early years are. They are the foundation for a lifetime of enriching human relationships,

for mental and physical health, for success at school and work. That is why so many of Macaulay’s programs and services focus on the child and family in those critical early years.

Our agency vision is to enable our children to thrive in caring, responsive families and community.

This Newsletter explores some of the ways we make this vision a reality.

Best wishes for a happy and loving holiday season.

Sharon Filger
Executive Director

1 Mental Health Matters

Continued...

Here is how we are fostering mental health in young children across the agency

Our **Child Care Centres** are introducing a new staffing model that will enhance the attachment between the child and the Early Childhood Educator (*see details on Page 4*).

In our **Home Visiting Program**, we are using the proven Partners in Parenting Education (PIPE) curriculum to enhance parent-child attachment. Our staff work one on one with parents, demonstrating various fun and meaningful activities that foster an emotional connection.

As a result, staff are noticing stronger engagement and increased warmth between parents and their babies. One parent of twins commented, “These activities

are amazing – the babies love them and I can see such a change in them. I love doing them too!”

Our **Early Years Programs** welcome families into a warm, inviting setting that communicates key messages for building infant mental health. For example:

- **Your attentive relationship with your child makes a difference.**
- **It’s not complicated – it’s all about the ‘serve and return’ of everyday interactions.**

Our programs are designed intentionally to encourage parents and children to sing, play, read and talk together.

As an organization committed to helping children fulfill their potential, we are excited to translate this evolving knowledge about infant mental health into our program practices. We can see the results as we see the eyes of both adults and children lighting up every day.



DO try this at home:

How do you talk with a baby or very young child to build a relationship and nurture learning? For some it may come naturally, but many parents appreciate the individual guidance that staff at our early years programs offer to all families.

- ✓ Face to face interactions are best.
- ✓ Wait for your child’s response, then respond accordingly.
- ✓ Repeat or add words when your child is exploring language.

3 A Chance to Succeed

Macaulay's early identification and intervention programs make a lasting difference

When issues and concerns arise in young children, early identification and intervention is critical for long term success. At Macaulay, we offer developmental screening in **every** program for children ages 0-6. Macaulay staff are often the first to identify a concern, but it's our ability to respond to these concerns that makes all the difference.

For example, a developmental screen for a 2 year old boy in our **Home Visiting Program** uncovered serious issues. The Family Home Visitor encouraged the parent to seek help from her doctor, but the mother insisted the child was fine. **We know that it can be hard for parents to hear that their child may need extra support.** Many choose to ignore the warning signs and advice from caregivers, afraid of what a diagnosis might mean for their family. In this case, the Home Visitor continued to nurture a trusting relationship with the parent and connect with the child. With trust between them, she explained that there are programs and services available that will help her child grow, develop and thrive. Recognizing that this would serve to benefit not only her child, but her entire family as well, the mother agreed to take the screening results to her doctor. This led to a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and opened the door to an array of services.

This example is not unique. We complete over 1,200 early identification screenings each year. Where additional support and referrals are required, Macaulay works with the entire family to ensure the best chance at success.

Here's another example. A child and parent recently began attending our **Early Years Program**. Our staff immediately noticed that this child was lagging behind in some critical areas including self-help skills, language and social skills, and the ability to follow routine. Without these skills, his entry into kindergarten, just a few weeks away, might be really difficult. Appropriate intervention



was needed to prevent this child starting his school career on the wrong foot. So we encouraged the family to attend our School Readiness Program where the child could learn the routines and expectations of the classroom and the parents could get tips on how to continue this learning at home. We then suggested the family attend our Small Group program for children with special needs. Here they received more individualized strategies on how to enhance their child's development at home through simple games and focused parent-child interactions. By the time the programs ended, both the parent and child were better prepared for Kindergarten and beyond.

Our **Speech and Language** program echoes this commitment to early intervention. Through partnerships and special outreach strategies, we are identifying children's needs as early as possible.

Throughout the agency we work together with children and families to **identify** and **respond** to each child's unique needs. Knowing that, with a little extra support, every child can have a chance to succeed.

How do I get help?

"Your call is important to us." We have all heard these mechanical words when we try to get help with a problem. But at Macaulay, we really mean it.

Macaulay's Parent Advocacy Project helps bring parents together to learn how to navigate services and be an effective voice for their children. Workshops are starting again in the New Year. Call 416.789.7441 for information.



5 Get Involved

The holidays are coming...

Winter is upon us, bringing with it that holiday excitement that children look forward to all year. But for many families at Macaulay, the holidays can be a time of stress and uncertainty. More than 50% of Macaulay families earn less than \$30,000 annually. Here's how you can help:

Make a donation.

- Every dollar supports programs that help families thrive.

Having an event?

- Direct a portion of your proceeds to Macaulay.

Make children smile. Donate any of the following items:

- Gifts for ages 6-12: lego, books, electronics;
- Gifts for ages 0-5: diapers, baby books, soft toys;
- Winter clothing for all ages: hats, gloves, blankets.

Get involved:

- Become a tutor in our After School Program;
- Help label and sort books in our Book Nook;
- Have a fundraising idea? We'd love to hear about it.

To make a donation, please visit our website www.macaulaycentre.org and press the Donate Now button or mail in your gift to 2010 Eglinton Ave. West, Toronto, ON M6E 2K3

For any other inquiries, contact Shana Gelbart at sgelbart@macaulaycentre.org or 416.789.7441 ext.250



United Way
Member Agency

4 New! Primary Caregiving Model

Our child care centres are introducing a new model of care – one that enhances the long-term mental health and well-being of children.

With this new model, each infant and toddler will be assigned to a specific early childhood educator who will be their **primary caregiver**. While the entire child care centre team will continue to care for ALL children, the primary caregiver will make extra efforts to connect with the child assigned to her.

It's a simple idea with big impact.

Experts tell us that in infancy and toddlerhood, the bond between a child and their caregiver provides the main vehicle for long-term physical, cognitive and social-emotional development. Of course the strongest and most powerful attachments are with parents or guardians, but children can also form attachments with other adults such as grandparents, neighbours and their child care teachers.

These bonds take time to develop. The Primary Caregiving Model helps children bond more quickly and securely in the child care setting. Children who experience this connection are more confident, more likely to try new things, more relaxed, and better able to learn.



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