

**Richmond, a child friendly community where young children thrive**



# **Our Commitment to Children**

**Richmond Children First  
Strategic Plan  
2012–2015**

**April 2012**

## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
About Richmond Children First	3
2008- 2011 Strategic Plan	3
Funding	4
Evaluation	6
The Strategic Planning Process	7
Richmond Children First Strategic Plan	8
Operational Plan	9
Implications of the Strategic Plan	10
Appendix 1: Participants	12
Appendix 2: Trends and Priorities: Strategic Planning Forum	13



## Introduction

### About Richmond Children First

**Richmond Children First** has been active since 2003 as a community partnership that brings people together to build a supportive, responsive community for children and their families.

Initially, **Richmond Children First** focused on early child development, researching and responding to growing evidence that a child's experiences during the first 5 years of life has a profound and lasting impact on long term social, emotional and physical development. The initial objectives of Richmond Children First were: increasing community capacity; increasing service delivery effectiveness; engaging of "hard to reach" families; and, increasing opportunities for early identification and screening to improve outcomes for children and families.

In 2007, Richmond was one of 4 communities selected by United Way of the Lower Mainland as a demonstration site to focus on local planning – to explore how communities support children and how community partnerships, services and supports can be improved for school-aged children. **Richmond Children First** was invited to host the project because of its cross-sectoral representation and history of community engagement.

Until 2011, **Richmond Children First** and Richmond Middle Childhood Matters operated as separate community initiatives. However during that time, joint projects were implemented and the Steering Committees overseeing the two initiatives met regularly. In June 2011, the two initiatives began to merge with the understanding that the merger would be evaluated as part of the strategic planning process early in 2012.

### 2008 – 2011 Strategic Plan

The impetus for the 2008-2011 strategic plan was driven by both internal and external factors. Externally, the community and public sector landscape had significantly changed (and continued to shift), in particular relating to the roles of the Ministry of Education (School Boards), the Ministry of Health (provincially and regionally in Vancouver Coastal Health) and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (now known as the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation). Furthermore, as a community funder, United Way of the Lower Mainland was in the process of developing a new three-year strategic plan for their early childhood portfolio.

From an organizational perspective, **Richmond Children First**, in response to community requests, continued to broaden the scope of its traditional activities. In addition to being invited to sponsor a middle childhood initiative, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, through their Immigrant Settlement Branch had also invited Richmond Children First to work with community partners to develop a Richmond project for refugee families. While the original mandate to "connect research, people, ideas and resources" continued to shape the activities and projects since

2004, the types of activities undertaken by Richmond Children First over the past year were being increasingly informed by public and community sector landscape changes.

### Richmond Middle Childhood Matters

This was also a timely opportunity for Richmond Middle Childhood Matters, as a parallel initiative, to undertake a strategic planning process. The Reference Group for this initiative felt that strategic planning was needed to re-ignite a commitment for the initiative. While the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Richmond Middle Childhood Matters had seen many accomplishments, committee members were feeling stalled. There were several reasons for this:

- The initiative was still awaiting community-specific results of the UBC research on The Psychological and Social World of Children 9 -12 Years Old
- Newness of working with the middle childhood age group
- And, a need for broader representation on the Reference Group

From the beginning of the strategic planning process it was clear that both **Richmond Children First** and Richmond Middle Childhood Matters should be community development initiatives focused on mobilizing the community to support children through community planning, public awareness and building a child-friendly community.

This initial 3-year plan created a solid foundation for **Richmond Children First** projects and activities, providing both guidance and a framework to measure the alignment of emerging priorities.

## Funding

### Ministry of Children and Family Development

The Ministry of Children & Family Development (MCFD) has been a long term stable funder of early childhood development, in particular through their support for the Children First initiative and Implementation Manager position. Make Children First is a key strategy of MCFD, designed to promote and support local community and public sector collaboration towards an integrated system of effective services and supports for young children and their families. MCFD funds over 90 community ECD initiatives across the province.

MCFD considers Richmond Children First a community planning and development initiative administered under the Children First Learning Initiatives Implementation Guidelines issued by the Province of BC. These Guidelines include key considerations for implementation of the initiative, accountability and reporting obligations, and evaluation.



Funding for Richmond Children First is intended to provide the resources to:

- Lead the initiative
- Integrate community supports
- Involve the community
- Increase the understanding of the resources and assets of the community

### United Way of the Lower Mainland

Early childhood and middle childhood are 2 of the 3 key social issues funded by United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM). Success by 6 is UWLM's early childhood development initiative dedicated to providing children with *a good start in life*. UWLM supports middle childhood development (ages 6-12) by working towards a vision of seeing that *children are happy, healthy and resilient*.

March 2012 marks the end of a 3-year funding commitment to **Richmond Children First** from UWLM through their ECD Community Planning Partnerships funding stream. This funding has supported Richmond Children First's strategic priorities through numerous projects, including the development and printing of a series of multilingual parent maps; cross-sectoral professional development; the development of an ECD Community Framework; and, support for the development of the Richmond Children's Charter. UWLM has not yet announced plans for future ECD funding for community initiatives.

**Richmond Children First** does currently receive funding from United Way of the Lower Mainland to address middle childhood. Year 1 of a 3-year funding commitment is just wrapping up. This funding is directed to community planning and capacity building in order to:

- Coordinate stakeholders who are engaged in serving children 6-12 years
- Coordinate and facilitate local area research to identify middle childhood development priorities
- Build public awareness of community needs, community assets and the community's potential for meeting the middle childhood priorities
- Build partnerships amongst stakeholders to pool their resources and align their competencies to execute the middle childhood priorities;
- Demonstrate efforts to leverage additional resources and funding support

## Evaluation

In the fall of 2005, the BC Early Childhood Development [ECD] Funders Group agreed to work together to test whether it was possible to identify and agree upon common child outcomes for BC. After reviewing relevant research, the following vision and 4 long term outcomes were adopted:

### Vision:

Children are healthy and develop to their full potential.

### Long Term Outcomes:

1. Mothers are healthy and give birth to healthy infants who remain healthy.
2. Children experience healthy early child development, including optimal early learning and care.
3. Parents are empowered and supported to nurture and support their children.
4. Communities support the development of all children and families.

The ECD Evaluation Project aims to create an integrated evaluation and reporting system for community ECD initiatives across BC.

**Richmond Children First** participates in an annual evaluation focused on the 4<sup>th</sup> long term outcome. Our participation is twofold. As a contractual obligation to MCFD, this information provides an overview of the significant impact of ECD community initiatives both regionally and provincially. And, the evaluation provides the RCF Steering Committee with evidence-based data that allows for regular evaluation of strategic directions.

The intermediate and short term outcomes from the evaluation are:

1. Improved community driven planning and coordination
  - a. More inclusive/active community coalition
  - b. Improved knowledge and ability to use research and evidence to guide initiatives
  - c. Increased use of a local ECD plan to guide initiatives
  - d. Increased use of evaluation for improvement
2. Improved local awareness and mobilization
  - a. Increased community awareness of the importance of the early years
  - b. Increased ability to resource locally identified priorities
  - c. Increased community engagement
3. Improved service delivery
  - a. Increased service coordination and integration
  - b. Increased accessibility
  - c. Improved knowledge of best practices in ECD

## The Strategic Planning Process

The Strategic Planning process took place over a 3-month period from January – March 2012 and was coordinated by the Strategic Planning Action Team, under the direction of the Richmond Children First Steering Committee. Richmond Children First Steering Committee members and Action Team members (Appendix 1) participated in a series of activities.

### Interviews

- Interviews with Steering Committee members (Jan-Feb, 2012)
- Focus group with Action Team members (Feb 2012)

### Trends and Priorities (Appendix 2)

- Strategic Planning Forum (Feb 2012)

### Environmental Scan

- Early and middle childhood initiatives across the Lower Mainland (March 2012)

### Strategic Directions

- Richmond Children First Steering Committee (March 2012)

### Operational Plan

- Richmond Children First Steering Committee (May 2012)

## Richmond Children First Strategic Plan

### VISION

A child friendly community where children and families thrive

### MISSION

Promoting early and middle child development and supporting families by connecting research, people, ideas and resources

#### GOAL

Engage the community to promote and support child development

#### GOAL

Build on strengths in the community that enhance opportunities for children and families

#### OBJECTIVE

Create awareness and support for the Children's Charter and Helping Kids Succeed Richmond-Style

#### OBJECTIVE

Increase accessibility to programs and services for children and families

#### OBJECTIVE

Raise community awareness of the importance of child development

#### OBJECTIVE

Establish and support communication and relationship building networks that promote child development

#### OBJECTIVE

Create a voice for children by mobilizing the community through evidence-based research and child-friendly practices

#### OBJECTIVE

Respond to current and emerging issues impacting children and families

#### OBJECTIVE

Lead/support innovative projects and practices that advance outcomes for children and families

## Operational Plan

Goal: Develop an inclusive community vision for children

	Action Plan
<b>Objective:</b> Create awareness & support for the Children’s Charter and Helping Kids Succeed Richmond-Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Endorsement by Richmond City Council</li> <li>▪ Develop endorsement and awareness plan</li> <li>▪ Release booklet Helping Kids Succeed Richmond Style</li> <li>▪ Develop strategy for ongoing engagement of children and front line staff</li> <li>▪ Implement plan</li> <li>▪ Children’s Charter evaluation plan</li> <li>▪ Phase 2: Children’s Rights and Responsibilities (family engagement)</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> Raise community awareness of the importance of child development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update website, blog and Facebook</li> <li>▪ Develop awareness strategy</li> <li>▪ Develop/distribute materials and give presentations</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> Create a voice for children by mobilizing the community through evidence-based research and child-friendly practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish Policy Action Team</li> <li>▪ Develop guidelines to support policy work and process to determine emerging issues</li> <li>▪ Determine role of advocacy for RCF</li> <li>▪ Develop position papers, briefs as appropriate</li> <li>▪ Host annual community forums</li> <li>▪ Develop and implement plan to share findings and develop projects based on Middle Development Instrument (MDI) research</li> </ul>

Goal: Maximize the capacity of public and community organizations to work together to improve the well being of children

	Action Plan
<b>Objective:</b> Increase accessibility to programs and services for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish Action Team</li> <li>▪ Research Phase</li> <li>▪ Community Dialogue</li> <li>▪ Implement plan</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> Establish and support formal and informal communication and relationship building networks that promote child development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Phase 2: ECD Community Framework – expand to 0 to 12 years and develop outcomes and indicators</li> <li>▪ Brown Bag Networking Sessions</li> <li>▪ RCF Announcements</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> Respond to current and emerging issues impacting children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Face of Child Poverty</li> <li>▪ City Centre Place Based Strategy (subject to invitation to apply)</li> <li>▪ Respond to emerging issues as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Objective:</b> Lead/support innovative projects and practices that advance outcomes for children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partner: Early Years Bridging Program</li> <li>▪ Respond to community requests</li> </ul>

## Implications of the Strategic Plan

Throughout the Strategic Planning process there was considerable discussion about structure, evaluation and the specific activities identified as priorities for 2012-2015. Although the Operational Plan contains the essence of those discussions, the more significant points are compiled here as implications that will need to be considered as the strategic plan is implemented.

### Structure

- Strong commitment to 'equal voice' for early and middle childhood; ensure language reflects this
- Strengthen the framework that supports the Action Teams
- Ensure the Steering Committee becomes more strategic (big picture)
- Terms of Reference clearly articulate commitments and expectations; ensure they are implemented
- Steering Committee membership needs to shift - research by the Human Early Learning Partnership (UBC) shows that communities who are successful in reducing child vulnerability have strong intersectoral leadership, with steering committee members coming from senior levels of organizations. Action Teams are just as important as Steering Committee. How can we shift 'get it done' people to provide leadership to Action Teams?
- Develop orientation plan for new members – orientation package, mentoring.
- How do we do our business?
  - Monthly meetings (90 minutes) – operational and strategic
  - Meeting packages sent ahead of time; committee members expected to read materials before meeting
- Consider, as a committee members – What do you bring to the table? What do you bring back to your organization?
- Develop guidelines for letters of support, conflict of interest, etc

### Evaluation

- How do we measure success? How do we measure community development? Can we extract outcomes from the Richmond Children's Charter?
- Use the BC-ECD Evaluation as a basis to develop an evaluation tool
- Evaluation for Richmond Children First may need to look very different from how evaluation is done within organizations. Stories? Reflective practice?
- Measure how we work together

### Maximize the capacity of public and community organizations to work together

- How can we engage organization leaders and front-line staff?
- What do we value? When do we work best together?
- Provide opportunities for organizations to learn how to partner effectively to improve child outcomes
- Use ECD Community Framework as basis for common learnings and to develop working relationships

### Advocacy

- Define and develop Richmond Children First's role in advocacy
- Is advocacy issue based (i.e. spanking, social-emotional development) and/or policy based (i.e. influencing health public policy)
- Can advocacy be based on RCF guiding principles? Richmond Children's Charter?
- What do we need to put into place to make advocacy effective?
- How can we support advocacy work being done by other organizations?
- Engage with and influence key stakeholders to develop and sustain ECD related action
- Advocate for the resources and capacities required for ECD action
- Secure cross-sector commitment for child well-being
- Reconcile political priorities and community needs

### Barriers to Access

- Explore value- and relational-based barriers and implement solutions
- Be reflective of changing Richmond demographics

### Innovative Projects

- Support innovative projects and practices that engage grandparents , outreach to religious communities, meet emerging needs

This Strategic Plan will be guided by the professional competencies developed by the Early Years Community Development Institute:

**Leadership:** Having a well communicated vision that builds trust among colleagues and involves mobilizing, influencing and guiding others.

**Influencing Policy:** Advocacy that takes different forms and requires the context to influence the approach.

**Research and Accountability:** The use of and participation in research to analyze situations, explore options, understand possible outcomes that is then able to justify decisions from a sound knowledge base.

**Community Awareness, Engagement and Education:** Actively and meaningfully learn from and share information with different segments of the community to enhance knowledge, skills and behaviours that promote optimum child development opportunities.

**Community Collaboration:** Growing and sustaining multi-agency, multi-discipline, cross cultural community collaboration to work together to improve services, supports and opportunities for children and their families.

## Appendix 1: Participants in Strategic Planning Process

Boys and Girls Clubs of South BC	Jason Lee
Boys and Girls Clubs of South BC	Kirsten Hamaoki
CHIMO Crisis Services	Rebeca Avendano
City of Richmond	Lesley Sherlock, Community Services Department
City of Richmond	John Foster, Community Services Department
City of Richmond	Alan Hill, Community Services Department
City of Richmond	Elizabeth Ayers, Community Recreation
Family Services of Greater Vancouver	Kareen Hudson
Ministry for Children & Family Development	David Phillips, Operations & Regional ECD
Richmond Addiction Services	Rick Dubras
Richmond Family Place	Kim Winchell
Richmond Family Place	Janice Lambert
Richmond Family Place	Hala Kapani
Richmond Public Library	Virginia McCreedy
Richmond School District	Kathy Champion, Learning Services
Richmond School District	Larry Antrim, Counseling
Richmond School District	Lily Zhou, SWIS Program
Richmond Society for Community Living	Mara Lea Schroeder
Richmond Society for Community Living	Ramnik Ahluwalia
Richmond Society for Community Living	Annie Hung
Scouts Canada	Vikki Fanous
Touchstone Family Association	Judy Valsonis
Vancouver Coastal Health-Richmond	Anne Murdoch, Richmond Public Health
Vancouver Coastal Health-Richmond	Kathy Hydamaka, Richmond Public Health
Vancouver Coastal Health-Richmond	Diane Bissenden, Richmond Public Health
Vancouver Coastal Health-Richmond	Chris Salgado, Richmond Public Health
Vancouver Coastal Health-Richmond	Marcy Adler-Bock, Speech and Language
VRIS – Child Care Resource and Referral	Marcia MacKenzie
YMCA	Jenny Payton

## Appendix 2: Trends and Priorities

### Richmond Children First Strategic Planning Forum (February 2012)

#### Early and Middle Childhood Research and Trends

Joanne Schroeder, Human Early Learning Partnership

Joanne provided an overview of provincial and Lower Mainland EDI results.

- There has been little variation in results for most communities
- Northern BC always has the highest vulnerability
- Interior BC always has the lowest vulnerability

#### EDI Trends in Richmond

- Overall vulnerability about 30%; one of the most consistent across the province
- Overall vulnerability when we remove the Communications Scale (ESL and communication delays) is about 26%
- Vulnerability on both the Social Competence Scale and the Emotional Maturity Scale have increased; this is similar to many BC communities
- A slight increase in vulnerability on the Physical Scale

#### Middle Development Instrument (MDI)

- Joanne provided an overview of MDI
- Richmond will not be participating in 2012 because of teachers' labour dispute
- A large percentage of Lower Mainland children taking the MDI report they are anxious. This is substantiated by research showing increased levels of anxiety if 9-10 year olds across the country.

#### Proportionate Universality

- Joanne provided an overview of proportionate universality
- Vulnerability is being driven by families who do not access services
- Barriers for families are now divided into categories:
  - **Infrastructure barriers:** These are barriers where we know the solution (transportation, cost, language, etc)
  - **Relational/value-based barriers:** Conflicting expectations, social distance and parental consciousness

#### What Makes a Community Resilient?

The following items seem to be evident in communities that are having success in decreasing vulnerability:

- Focus on EDI outcomes
- Research focused
- Plan in place to increase access, decrease barriers
- Strong intersectoral leadership (people steering community initiatives come from senior levels of organizations)
- Close alignment with the school system

**Priority for Richmond: Social-Emotional Vulnerability**

- Children are anxious, fearful
- Children used to feel protected; now they worry about safety – kidnapping, murder, etc
- Hyper-parenting impacting children (A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting)

**What can you do to build these assets in children?**

- Encourage exploration
- Mentor in basic skills
- Celebrate developmental advances
- Rehearse and extend new skills
- Protect from inappropriate disapproval, teasing, and punishment
- Communicate richly and responsively
- Guide and limit behaviour

**Review of Current RCF Strategies and Current Projects**

Helen Davidson, Community Coordinator

STRATEGIES		
ENCOURAGE THE COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT EARLY & MIDDLE CHILD DEVELOPMENT	BUILD ON STRENGTHS IN THE COMMUNITY THAT ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	MAXIMIZE EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES TO IMPROVE THE WELL BEING OF CHILDREN
Early & Middle Childhood: <b>Richmond Children’s Charter</b>	Early & Middle Childhood: <b>Information Sharing, Networking &amp; Building Partnerships &amp; Capacity</b>	Early Childhood: <b>Richmond City Centre Project</b>
Early & Middle Childhood: <b>Book: HKS Richmond-Style</b>		Early Childhood: <b>Richmond ECD Bridging Project</b>
Early & Middle Childhood: <b>The Face of Child Poverty</b>	Early Childhood: <b>ECD Community Framework</b>	
Early & Middle Childhood: <b>RCF Announcements</b>	Early Childhood: <b>ECD Learning Series</b>	
Early & Middle Childhood: <b>Richmond Children’s Charter</b>		
Early & Middle Childhood: <b>Richmond Website &amp; Social Media</b>		
Early & Middle Childhood: <b>Briefs, Support and Advocacy</b>		
Early & Middle Childhood <b>Research Projects</b>		
Early Childhood: <b>Education &amp; Awareness: Growing Together Development Guide</b>		

**Small Group Discussion: What current Richmond Children First priorities continue to be relevant?**

**Richmond Children's Charter**

- Validate with children
- Check it out with stakeholders
- Parents' rights education
- Address cross-cultural issues

**Helping Kids Succeed Richmond-Style**

- Embed asset philosophy
- Make it relevant for front line staff
- Focus on families

**Richmond Website and Social Media**

- Expand to Facebook and Twitter
- Develop social media strategy

**Education and Awareness**

- Multilingual resources; dissemination strategies

**Information Sharing, Networking and Building Partnerships & Capacity**

- Opportunities to learn how to partner effectively

**Richmond ECD Bridging Project**

- Continue support

**ECD Community Framework**

- Implement Community Outcomes Framework

**Maximize Resources**

- Explore partnership projects

**Face of Child Poverty in Richmond**

**Growing Together Development Guide**

**Research Projects**

- Service and Asset Mapping

**Bucket list for future projects based on new and emerging priorities**

**Structure**

- Weave early and middle childhood into the fabric of the strategic plan and framework
- Where are we in our vision? What are our over-arching principles?
- How do we measure success?
- How can we be inclusive? How can we engage organizational leaders and front line staff?

**Encourage the community to promote and support early & middle child development**

- Define and develop RCF's role in advocacy
  - How can RCF influence healthy public policy to influence child well-being?
- Create family and child-friendly communication tools
- Media literacy awareness for parents
- Educate parents about the importance of conversations to support language development

**Build on strengths in the community that enhance opportunities for children and families**

- Define partnerships and look at partnership paradigms
- Explore *inspiring practices*
- Develop a strategy on getting front line staff to identify trends
- Explore value-based barriers and seek solutions
- Explore and solve barriers of working class families
- Research proportional universality and explore community solutions and partnerships
- Design facilities to reflect child spaces, not only adult spaces (play, social context)
- Develop partnership with city planners to create common spaces for conversations

**Maximize effective use of resources to improve the well being of children**

- Maximize resources
- Build the capacity of organizations to communicate effectively and creatively through print and electronic media
- Support innovative programs and practices
  - Develop strategies to support and engage grandparents
  - Outreach to cultural and religious communities
  - Link to advocacy
  - Meet emerging needs
  - Look at barriers
  - Link RCF strategies to Richmond organizations
- Bring outreach programs to families

**Other (Program Focused)**

- Develop early interventions for families who cannot access StrongStart Centres
- Offer more after-school programs
- Develop programs to address increasing mental health issues in children (similar to Friends but more broad-based)