COMMUNITY,CONVERSATIONS AND CONNECTION:

OCEANSIDE-PARKSVILLE

2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT OCEANSIDE-PARKSVILLE

Oceanside, which includes the communities of Parksville and Qualicum Beach, is a vibrant coastal area with a population of approximately 32,000. This region lies within the traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, particularly the Qualicum and Snaw-naw-as First Nations, with approximately 6% of the population identifying as Indigenous.

In terms of early childhood development, recent data from the Early Development Instrument (EDI) indicates that around 32% of children in School District 69 are considered vulnerable in at least one developmental area by the time they enter kindergarten, signaling a need for community supports and resources to help ensure positive growth outcomes. In the Oceanside community, the numbers indicate that Emotional Maturity, Social Competence and Language and Cognitive Development of children in kindergarten are higher than their needs in other areas of development.

"Where the ocean meets the forest, and community thrives in harmony with nature."

"Designed by Jesse Recalma and manufactured by Parksville based Wellington Foundry, the art piece is outfitted with evolving themes of lights. (Town of Qualicum Beach)"
Nanaimonewsnow.com

WHAT WE HEARD IN OCEANSIDE

Oceanside is a diverse community facing the challenges of a growing population alongside a shortage of qualified staff. The recent discussions involved a wide range of families and service providers, each bringing unique perspectives that resulted in eleven recommendations—some feasible at the local level, and others requiring regional or provincial support. Although there are notable unmet needs for both families and services across the region, there is a strong commitment to working toward solutions that meet community needs despite these challenges.

An interesting contradiction emerged in the findings: while collaboration was noted as a strong point, it was also identified as an area needing improvement. This likely reflects the varied experiences of long-term residents who have established connections with local social services and government agencies, as compared to newcomers or private service providers. The data highlights the need to better integrate private providers into existing networks and ensure knowledge transfer across all agencies. High staff turnover has, in some cases, weakened the strong connections that are typically a hallmark of close-knit communities like Oceanside.

'' WE ARE NOT A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY!''

Attendees included a diverse group of practitioners and community representatives, including:

- SOURCES Community Resources
- Qualicum First Nation Community representatives
- SOS
- School District 69
- Child and Youth Mental Health
- Public Health
- MCFD: Child and Youth with Special Needs (CYSN) department
- Local private practitioners

- Local Private Independent School
- Local Preschool and Childcare Provide
- Pacific Care: Childcare support services organization
- Private Behavioral Analysts: Specialists in behavioral analysis and support
- Parksville Qualicum Integrated Child & Youth Team: Leadership in integrated child and youth services

''MOVING BEYOND SURVIVING TO THRIVING"

This diverse assembly of participants provided essential insights, creating a thorough understanding of the community's service needs and gaps.
Engagement in Oceanside-Parksville took place over 14 weeks, starting in July 2024 and concluding in the fall. The meeting spaces were carefully selected for accessibility, accommodating individuals with mobility concerns. Sessions were held in a variety of locations and also available via Zoom. An online survey was offered for those unable to attend in person, and a Clinical Counsellor was on-site. Four key questions were posed at all sessions, except the final review session:

1. What services and supports are currently working well?
2. Is there anything missing?
3. What would an ideal network of services and support look like?
4. Any other comments?

The sessions were well-attended, with 85 individuals participating across three in-person meetings, two virtual meetings, and an additional 32 responses via online surveys. Participants included service providers, parents, youth with diverse experiences of disability, and individuals with varying lengths of time in the community. Attendees represented both in-town residents and those from outlying areas, with a cross-section of professional backgrounds. Discussions were engaging, candid, and covered a broad range of perspectives, providing valuable insights into the community's needs and aspirations for support services.

THINGS THAT ARE WORKING

PRACTITIONER MEETING JULY 24, 2024

Families and youth accessing services expressed that they found the available supports to be diverse and effective. They appreciated the relationships they were able to build and the variety of services offered, including afterschool programs and child care. Flexible funding was also valued when accessible. Service agencies and private providers were recognized for offering engaging and enjoyable programs.

Providers felt that being in a small community fostered communication between service organizations, allowing them to "call and leave a question" with ease. Strong, established relationships enabled them to help clients find the right services, and creative approaches to support were noted as working well. They appreciated that "the industry attracts dedicated, good-hearted staff."

"TEAM WORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK''

PRACTITIONER MEETING JULY 24, 2024

THINGS THAT ARE MISSING

CONVERSATION THEMES

"'... so many families in poverty - how can we support the complex needs if we can't meet basic needs?" -Service Provider

"Financial support for families that 'make too much money'. "
    -Parent

"Financial challenge, how do we help ensure kids can access services & money is not a barrier?"
    -Service Provider

"We need lots of funding to hire more practitioners. We have the capacity to retain skilled practitioners when we can pay them well. Adequate staffing would look like a managed waitlist and children being seen in a timely manner." -Service Provider

"Daycares that employ ECEAs, it's not enough support for children with special needs in daycare settings" -Parent

SUPPORTING DETAILS

1) Lack of Basic Supports

The lack of essentials such as food, shelter, and transportation creates a significant barrier to accessing available services. This challenge is intensified by the limited support and treatment options, which often prevent children from attending school and childcare and hinder parents from working. The inability to access services outside traditional hours further compounds the issue. Oceanside includes many rural areas with extremely limited public transportation, restricting access for families who rely on these services. This lack of support increases inequality, as some families can afford private services that are inaccessible to others. Additionally, the income cap for funding assistance is set so low that many families in need do not qualify.

2) Timely Access to Services

There was widespread frustration regarding delays in accessing support services. Waitlists are growing, driven in part by an increasing number of children needing assistance, as well as a lack of corresponding funding to hire sufficient professionals and staff to meet the demand. Additionally, there has been a reduction in the availability of qualified professionals, including trained childcare staff. The lack of adequate funding means services are only available during specific hours, with a notable absence of evening or weekend support, further limiting access for families in need.

THINGS THAT ARE MISSING

CONVERSATION THEMES

SUPPORTING DETAILS

"Central Stop - a hub that helps communicate information for all resources- need 'a person to manage the resources'."
        -Service Provider

"Parents do not know where to go to find information and navigate the systems."
        -Service Provider

"Families need 'a soft place to land' frustrated with waitlist and lack of call backs." -Service Provider

3) A Central Information Hub

Both families and service providers, including private and government-funded organizations, expressed the need for a central location to access information about available services. While many service providers work to network and help families find resources, the lack of a clear access point creates a significant barrier for families. In addition to a central information hub, there was a strong request for a navigator system to assist parents in understanding what services are available and where they can be accessed. This system would help guide families through the complex network of supports and streamline the process of finding the right assistance.

"A System that isn't so hard to navigate in terms of getting access to programs and supports for school age kids without a formal diagnosis."   -Parent

"Seeing the ability- not just managing the disability."
        -Parent

Lack of funding for a variety of needs related to children with differing needs ie: ASD funding available but limited for other needs."
        -Service Provider

4) Funding and Supports Based on Need, Not Just Diagnosis

The division between those with a formal diagnosis, particularly autism, and those without has created significant barriers to accessing supports and funding for families whose children face clear challenges but do not have a diagnosis. This issue was highlighted for children of all ages, but particularly for school-aged children. Families expressed frustration that the system often prioritizes diagnoses over actual needs, leaving many children without the necessary supports despite clear challenges. This gap in services based on diagnosis rather than need has become a major concern for families seeking assistance.

THINGS THAT ARE MISSING

CONVERSATION THEMES

SUPPORTING DETAILS

"...mental health support before I need it and not having to wait."

-Grade 8 student

"School-age kids services; so much for the early years but not for all school age."

-Service Provider

"More wellness service for children with unique needs. Program gaps for children 3-13 years old."

-Service Provider

5) Support for Children Between Ages 5 and 13
There were numerous requests for increased services focused on the transition between preschool and school. Several families highlighted the need for additional supports for elementary-ages children, particularly in areas such as mental health. Many emphasized the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by preteens, noting a gap in available mental health resources for this age group. These transitions are critical, and families expressed a need for more targeted services to ensure children and preteens receive the support they need during these formative years.

"Taught in primary language... language deprivation is awful."

-Parent

"Want to enjoy our children like everyone else. Should be able for our children to participate in extra curriculars and other activities."

-Parent

"Children [don't] have a voice."

-Parent

6) Targeted Supports for Children with Unique Needs.
Families whose children have unique needs, such as requiring translators of specialized services, often face difficulty accessing the support they need when only one or two children in the community have very specific adequate level of support. This lack of targeted resources creates a gap in services for children with specialized requirements, leaving families struggling to find the necessary assistance. There is a clear need for more tailored supports to address the diverse and unique needs of all children in the community.

THINGS THAT ARE MISSING

CONVERSATION THEMES

SUPPORTING DETAILS

"How do we create those informal networks for parents to have support of community?"

-Service Provider

"A system that isn't so hard to navigate with or without a diagnosis."

-Service Provider

"Parents having emotional support, there's a lot to take on and learn."

-Parent

"People are moving to Oceanside but the current system isn't meeting the demand."

-Service Provider

7) Supports for the Entire Family

Parents are feeling overwhelmed and overloaded, and their advocacy for their children's needs must be recognized. There is a call for increased collaboration between service providers and families, adopting a team-based approach to support. The provision of services and funding should not be focused solely on the child with a diagnosis, but also encompass the entire family, including grandparents. Supports should include not only counselling and skill-building opportunities but also spaces for families to connect and network with others facing similar challenges. This holistic approach will help alleviate the burden on parents and strengthen the support system for the entire family.

"Afterschool they are a mess because they have no support at school."

-Parent

" I didn't have help, (at school) I had to do it myself."

-Grade 4 Student

"Would love to see a borrowing system for devices (ipad/laptop) for support a home.

-Parent

"They make parents work so hard to get support for our children."

-Parent

8) School Supports

The request for increased supports at school came from both youth and families, highlighting the need not only for greater access to counselling and therapy services but also for technical support, such as a lending library of assistive devices. Additionally, there was a call for more flexibility with scheduling to accommodate diverse needs. The lack of educational assistants was frequently mentioned as a barrier, with many families expressing concerns that without adequate staffing, are not being fully met. These requests reflect a desire for a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

THINGS THAT ARE MISSING

CONVERSATION THEMES

SUPPORTING DETAILS

"Breakdown the stigma of needing supports."   -Service Provider

"Welcoming Rec Centers that takes care of support needs ie. parent stating a need for support and rec center responding 'We got you covered'."   -Parent

"Building supportive community providers."
-Service Provider

9) Increased Inclusion

The lack of inclusive recreation programs was a concern raised by many participants, including youth. There were requests for greater access to diverse group activities that cater to a wide range of abilities. Examples included opportunities for arts and crafts, as well as supports to enable participation in soccer and other organized sports. Participants expressed a desire for programs that are truly inclusive, ensuring that all children and youth, regardless of their abilities, have the opportunity to engage in recreational and social activities that promote well-being and community connection.

"More mandatory training."
-Service Provider

"School system does not support ADHD."   -Parent

"Build an inclusive community for ECE world."   -Service Provider

"Preschool and daycares need to be better able to support children, instead of not keeping children and asking parents to pick up."

-Parent

10) Access to Training for Professionals and Staff

Several service providers requested ongoing training to ensure that professionals and staff can maintain and upgrade their skills. This includes training for early childhood education assistants, as well as other professionals working with children and families. Regular professional development is seen as essential to keeping up with best practices, new research, and emerging needs within the community. Providing this training will help ensure that staff are well-equipped to support children and families effectively, fostering a higher standard of care and service.

encouraged

calm

inspired

over whelmed

exhausted

inclusion

compassion

seamless

connection

collaboration

community

inclusive

communication

cooperation

resourcefulness

trust

family centered

families

VISIONS AND SOLUTIONS

1) Support For Basic Needs (Food, Housing, Transport) ➔

Increasing income, food, housing and transportation support would make a significant improvement in access to needed treatments and services. This includes raising the income cap to allow middle income families to access funding supports.

2) A Landing Place, A Hub Or Central Entry To Services ➔

A low-barrier, welcoming space for all families and children, from infancy through high school, is a key request from the community. Suggestions include creating a physical hub that serves as an entry point to services, complemented by an online information portal that lists all available community resources. This would include up-to-date handouts detailing services, wellness and counselling support, as well as treatment programs. A central, publicized location would increase access for parents who may not be connected or informed about available services. Ideally, this hub would also facilitate increased networking between service providers, as some have expressed difficulty staying current with available resources.

Families also requested that the hub offer services to help them support and connect with one another. One idea was to include a technology lending library to enable the sharing of learning support devices, helping to address specific needs and promote inclusion for children requiring additional educational support.

VISIONS AND SOLUTIONS

3) A Navigator Program ➝

In addition to the physical hub, families requested having a dedicated relationship with a single service provider who can assist in navigating the system and funding programs. Families often struggle to find their way though various barriers and would greatly benefit from support in learning how to advocate effectively for their children. This assistance would not be limited to the early years but would continue throughout childhood, ensuring that families have ongoing support as their children's needs evolve. A consistent point of contact would provide continuity and guidance, helping families access the resources and services they require at each stage of their child's development.

4) Information Sharing ➝

An ethical method for information sharing between health providers is essential to reduce the burden on families who currently must repeatedly share their child's story. While confidentiality and security must be maintained, there is a need for a system that allows secure, confidential sharing of information. One potential solution could be a portfolio for each child, which travels with them and includes suggestions, goals, contacts, accomplishments, data, and strategies. This portfolio could also include a space for feedback from parents and teachers on the implementation of strategies. In addition, clear, honest, transparent, and frequent communication between service providers, schools, and parents is crucial to ensure that all parties are aligned and working together to support the child's needs effectively.

VISIONS AND SOLUTIONS

5) Funding and Services By Need and Severity Not Diagnosis or Age ⟶

Support should be available for all children, not just those with the "right" diagnosis or within specific age ranges. The diversity of symptoms and challenges faced by children and families often does not align with narrow diagnostic definitions. Many children may require support that falls outside traditional diagnostic categories, yet their needs are just as significant. It is important to adopt a more inclusive approach that recognizes the wide range of experiences and challenges children face, ensuring that all families receive the assistance they need, regardless of diagnosis or age.

6) Early Recognition of Needs ⟶

Currently, many children's challenges are not recognized until they enter school. Enhancing existing systems to create a proactive support network for families would help address this gap, enabling parents to access information and build knowledge about typical child development from an earlier stage. This could involve expanding existing infant and child community programs to include more comprehensive developmental screenings and parent education resources. By building awareness and providing early guidance, families would be better equipped to recognize and address potential developmental concerns, leading to earlier intervention and support.

''EVERY CHILD BELONGS''

VISIONS AND SOLUTIONS

7) No Wait List →

The shortage of professional services, support workers, and staff, both government-funded and private, has created a significant gap in access to essential supports and treatments. In some cases, waitlists exceed two years, while in other cases, services such as speech and language therapy are not available at all in certain schools. Addressing this issue may require increasing salaries, providing paid time for attending meetings and training, and expanding training opportunities for in-demand professionals and support staff, including early childhood educator assistants. Strengthening the workforce in these critical areas would improve access to timely, high-quality support for children and families.

8) Support Groups for Families and Youth →

A community-based support group for youth and their families could provide valuable networking opportunities, helping parents and families connect and support each other. Suggested activities include support groups, potlucks, and meet-and-greet events, all aimed at building on family strengths and fostering a sense of community. These gatherings would also offer opportunities for youth to explore their passions, develop new skills, and socialize in a supportive environment. Creating a space for shared experiences and mutual support would strengthen community ties and empower both youth and their families.

VISIONS AND SOLUTIONS

9) Increased School Support → Both educational assistants and treatment professionals are essential in schools to support student success. The shortage of educational assistants, particularly during class time and unstructured periods like recess, was frequently highlighted as a significant barrier to learning and development. Without these supports, students may struggle to stay engaged and succeed academically and socially. Increased access to trained assistants and professionals would provide the individualized attention many students need, helping them thrive in all aspects of the school environment.

10) Enhanced Networking Between Service Providers and Agencies → While Oceanside has a strong foundation of collaboration among service providers, not all are fully integrated into this network. Enhancing existing partnerships by actively reducing silos—particularly by including private service providers and orienting new staff to collaborative efforts—would further strengthen this system. Broadening participation in the network would improve communication and resource-sharing, creating a more unified support system for families and ensuring that all available services are effectively utilized.

11) A Provincial Network For Families With Specialized Needs → Families and children with unique or rare needs often require specialized services that may not be available locally, especially in smaller or rural communities. These needs may include specialized medical care or translation services, which are difficult to access outside larger urban centers. For these families, traveling to receive necessary care can be a significant burden, highlighting the need for solutions such as remote consultations, mobile services, or funding for travel when specialized, non-local support is essential.

CONCLUSION

Oceanside is experiencing significant challenges in meeting the needs of families and children with developmental challenges, despite having a strong foundation of agencies, programs, and professionals dedicated to creating a supportive network. The recent influx of families moving into the community, combined with funding and staffing shortages, has widened gaps in service provision. Long waitlists and a shortage of professionals and staff have left the needs of many of Oceanside's most vulnerable children and youth unmet.

Community conversations have initiated a dialogue on enhancing existing networks and supports while advocating for increased provincial resources. It is hoped that these discussions will continue, with the goal of strengthening current networks and ensuring all children and families in Oceanside have access to the support they need.

"THIS IS A COMMUNITY WHERE MEMBERS WORK TOGETHER FOR THE SAKE OF COMMUNITY BUT THERE ARE GAPS"

WITH GRATITUDE

The Community-Led Collaboration Project extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who shared their time, ideas, experiences, and concerns with us. Special appreciation goes to Beth at Dream Catcher Consulting for creating a safe space for these important discussions, and to Rhoda Taylor for her valuable contributions to our final report.

Your contributions have been invaluable as we work together to identify the best ways to support children and youth with disabilities and additional support needs in Oceanside, Parksville, and surrounding areas, ensuring they thrive both now and in the future.

Hands holding children up.

We are all connected

IMAGE FROM SERVICE PROVIDER EVENT

SOURCES
COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRES

FAMILIES OF OCEANSIDE

Sign up below to stay connected with up coming Community-Led Collaboration Projects.

COMPLETE A SURVEY
to WIN
one of 3 Gift Cards
to SAVE ON FOODS!
valued of up to
$100

*Winner will be contacted at the end of the summer.

✉
Feel free to email questions to
jsnowden@sourcesbc.ca

OCEANSIDE FAMILIES YOU'RE INVITED TO COMMUNITY-LED COLLABORATION PROJECT.

Oceanside families are invited to participate in conversations about services and supports for children and youth with disabilities or other support needs. We want to know what is working for families, what is missing and what a better network of services and supports could look like in Oceanside.

Wednesday, July 24th 2024 2pm-5pm

- ☑ At the Bradley Center
- ☑ Support for transportation
- ☑ Food wll be provided
- ☑ Support for childcare available

SOURCES   BCACDI   BCAAFC | BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres   inclusionBC   THE FEDERATION of COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES of BC

To register and for more information:

https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/community-led-collaboration-families-of-ocean-side-tickets-936096799727

Community-Led Collaboration Project

We want to hear from families with children and youth with disabilities or support needs.

Families in Oceanside are invited to participate in conversation about services and supports for children and youth with disabilities or other support needs in your community.

We want to know what is working for families, what is missing and what a better network of services and supports could look like in Oceanside.

Wednesday, July 24
2pm - 5pm
Bradley Center
975 Shearme rd, Coombs, BC
This is a FREE event
Food will be provided.
Support for transportation and childcare will be available.

To register and for more information:

https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/community-led-collaboration-families-of-ocean-side-tickets-936096799727?aff=oddtdtcreator

If unavailable to attened in person, there are various other ways to engage and offer your input. Please visit the website for more details of call Julie (SOURCES at 250 752 6766 or email jsnowden@sourcesbc.ca

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Community-Led Collaboration Project

We want to hear from local community service providers.

Local community service providers in Oceanside and surrounding areas are invited to participate in a conversation about how to create a better network of services and supports for children and youth with disabilities or other support needs in your community. We'll explore what is working for the families you support, what is missing and what better services and supports could look like in order to inform the future of services.

Wednesday, July 24
10 am - 1 pm
Bradley Center
975 Shearme rd, Coombs, BC
This is a FREE event
Food will be provided.

To register and for more information:

https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/community-led-collaboration-tickets-935831877337

If unavailable to attened in person, there are various other ways to engage and offer your input. Please visit the website for more details of call Julie (SOURCES at 250 752 6766 or email jsnowden@sourcesbc.ca

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IT'S A PIZZA PARTY

OCT. 17TH
3-5

We want to know what resources/supports are working for you and what is not !

THRUSDAY • **FREE** • **3:00PM-5:00PM**

SOURCES - Oceanside Resource Center • Lots of great GIFT CARDS to be won!

Come have pizza and answers a couple questions to be entered to win gift cards.

Community-Led Collaboration Project

We want to hear from community service providers who support children and youth with disabilities or other support needs.

Community service providers in Oceanside are invited to join a conversation about services and supports for children and youth with disabilities or other support needs in our community.

We want to understand what is working well, what gaps exist, and how we can build a stronger network of services and supports in Oceanside.

Thursday, October 17
11:30- 1:00
via Zoom -
This is a FREE event
Meeting ID: 88231130071
Pasecode: 204724

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