



THINKING **BIG** FOR OUR CHILDREN

In the Eastern Townships, most children are prospering and living in healthy circumstances that favour their full development. From birth, every action undertaken by a parent or adult in their environment will have a lifelong impact on: fulfillment, health, educational success, entry into the adult world, and the ability to actively contribute to society.

In the Eastern Townships, 29%¹ of children are considered at risk in at least one developmental domain upon entry to kindergarten, thus jeopardizing their ability to enjoy learning and their drive to succeed. Further, inequalities exist simply because children sometimes grow up under very different conditions. A few factors that contribute to the risk of developing these vulnerabilities are: having poorly educated parents, living in a low-income family, being born outside of Canada, having English as a mother tongue or being a boy.

Working together to Think Big for our Children

From birth and throughout all stages of development, many actors play leading roles in determining a child's life. First up are family and the immediate social circle, but we are also influenced by members of the community and institutional decision-makers as well as the local, regional, and provincial levels of government.

These actors have different impacts depending on their position of leverage: some directly on children and families, others via training and development of professional practices, by research, or even by creating favorable environments or public policies. The impacts become even more powerful when the actions are realized collectively!

In the Eastern Townships, the percentage of children with no vulnerability upon entry to kindergarten is 71%. The national goal is to raise this to 80% by 2025².

In the Eastern Townships, Thinking Big for our Children means attaining this target collectively, particularly by targeting children the most at risk to reduce inequalities.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

1. To recognize and support parents as the primary allies in a child's development

- To listen to and recognize the experiences of parents so that they might influence decisions made that affect their children.
- To support parents in a way that respects their values and builds on their potential strengths.

2. To act early

- To act pre-emptively regarding protective factors to maximize the impact on all children and all families, particularly during the most sensitive periods, e.g. during transitions.

Protective factors³:

- Children: Oral and written communication skills, cognitive skills, social and emotional skills, physical skills, and healthy lifestyle choices.
- Parents: Socio-economic level, and parental skills and practices.
- Community: Physical, social, economic, and cultural environment, accessibility and quality of services, mobilization and consultation of partners.

Transitions⁴:

Return to home after birth, return to work of the parents, integration into educational childcare services, entry into kindergarten, entry into grade 1.

- To use early intervention with children, if necessary, in order to modify or mitigate difficulties that might arise in the various areas of development.

3. To build upon promising methods

- To contribute to the lifting of barriers faced by families on their journey.

Barriers⁵:

Barriers accessing services and resources sometimes emerge from the parent or family, but also from various actors and organizations, governmental and societal. They may be individual and personal, social, physical, organizational, systemic, or economic.

- To work with an outreach approach style to truly reach families.

Outreach approach:

Taking an outreach approach means offering services and support to families where they already exist: directly in their living environment. This style aims first at developing a relationship of trust with the family, thus encouraging their active participation, followed by supporting them by adapting to their context and needs.

- To build upon the alliances between practical application and research findings to encourage innovation. Concrete results are created by combining everyone's knowledge.

4. To act with convergence and coherence

- To share a common understanding of a child's needs.
- To promote complementarity and continuity in services and actions.
- To act with the consultation of all community actors in mind.

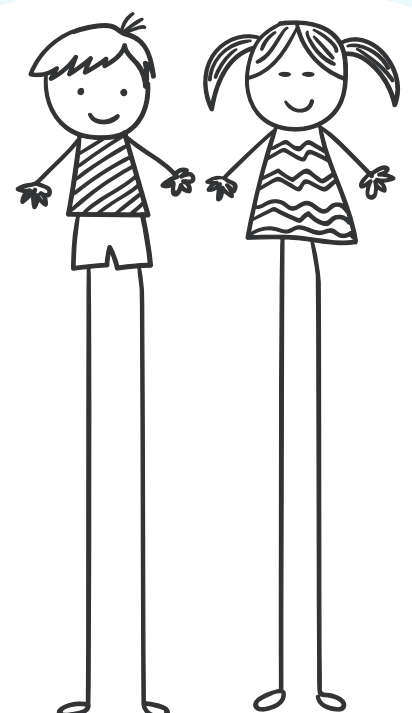


COMMITMENTS

We subscribe to the vision of a region where all children have an equal opportunity to attain their highest potential.

In order to increase the proportion of children who start school without vulnerability, in one of the domains mentioned, from 71% to 80% by 2025, and to promote their success throughout their education, we commit ourselves to:

- putting the needs of the child at the heart of our decision-making;
- recognizing that the four principles of action are essential to our collective success;
- taking concrete actions that are consistent with these principles;
- making the Charter known and encouraging our colleagues, our organization, or our partners to join.



¹ Direction de santé publique du CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS, 2018

² Politique gouvernementale de prévention en santé : msss.gouv.qc.ca/ministere/politique-prevention-sante

³ Facteurs de protection : agirtot.org/media/489863/10facteursprotectionimprimable.pdf

⁴ Transitions dans le parcours de vie : agirtot.org/media/489232/ae_infographie_delimportancedagirtot.pdf

⁵ Barrières sur le parcours des familles : agirtot.org/media/489957/fiche_barrieres_impression_2019.pdf