



UNDERSTANDING THE EARLY YEARS (UEY) INITIATIVE

Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey (PIDACS)

PROJECT INFORMATION 2006/2007



The Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey (PIDACS) is conducted by R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. for the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) Initiative of Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

BACKGROUND

Understanding the Early Years (UEY) provides communities with the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of Canada's children. UEY does this by helping communities use local information and foster partnerships among community groups to make decisions about the best policies and programs for young children to thrive. Human Resources and Social Development Canada funds the Initiative.

Understanding the Early Years includes the collection of information from Kindergarten teachers, parents and children. Last winter, Kindergarten teachers completed a questionnaire (called the Early Development Instrument, or EDI) for each of the children in their classes. The current phase of UEY is the data collection from parents and children in a survey called the Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey (PIDACS). These data collections are done in collaboration with participating schools, school boards, and the UEY coordinator.

A UEY community is selected through a call for proposals process after which time Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) enters into a contribution agreement with the project sponsor for the UEY community. Each UEY site will have three years to implement UEY activities. The following activities are intended for each year of this cycle:

Year One

- ***Teacher assessment of children using the Early Development Instrument (EDI).*** This assessment is completed on children in Kindergarten. The information reflects teachers' assessments of how well children were doing in five domains of development including physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development and communication skills and general knowledge.
- ***Community mapping exercise.*** Data from community level surveys of community resources will be mapped with census socioeconomic data and UEY data.

Year Two

- ***Parent interviews and direct assessments of children survey (PIDACS).*** The parent interviews include interviews with a parent or guardian about the child. The child assessments include administration of three activities (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Who Am I?, and the Number Knowledge Test).
- ***Development of a community action plan.***

Year Three

- ***Finalization of the action plan.***

Human Resources and Social Development Canada has contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to conduct the Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey (PIDACS) and to produce community research reports using the data.

Surveyors will be involved with the parent interviews over the telephone (or face-to-face in some cases), which are intended to collect information on the child's family (for example,

parent education and employment background, family processes and parenting style) and on the child's development and experiences.

The direct child assessments will take place in the schools (Kindergarten classes). Each child would be required to leave the classroom for about 30 to 40 minutes with an assessor to complete the activities in a quiet area. School boards have already been contacted and permission has been given to complete the assessments in the schools. It is expected that between 6 and 30 students from each participating Kindergarten class will be assessed.

History of the UEY Initiative

UEY was launched as a research initiative to enhance knowledge about community factors that influence the early development of children. Starting in 1999 with North York, Ontario, by 2001 the pilot initiative comprised 12 communities.

UEY became a national initiative in 2004. The first group of 21 new communities received funding in Fall 2005.

Objectives of the Initiative

A key objective of the UEY Initiative is to provide communities with quality local information about their children, families and the community so that they can develop action plans to address gaps in services and programs for young children and their families.

Information collected through UEY helps communities understand how their children are doing physically, socially and cognitively, and how families and the community are supporting these children. Parents, teachers and others can then learn about what works in their community and together come up with creative solutions to help their children do even better.

PIDACS data is an important source of this information for each community. The objectives of this data collection are to:

- Provide information about how Kindergarten children are doing;
- Provide information on the family and community factors that influence child development, including the role of the family, parent's perceptions of their community, and the child's experiences; and
- Allow communities to compare their children's development to the national norms established with the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, which collects data on children every two years as they grow up.

List of UEY Participating Communities:

The following include communities participating in the current national initiative (2006/2007 school year). Sponsoring organizations are in square brackets.

- Greater Victoria, BC [Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria]
- Mission, BC [United Way of Fraser Valley]
- Okanagan Simikameen (Oliver), BC [School District No. 53 Okanagan Simikameen]

- Sunshine Coast (Powell River), BC [Powell River Child, Youth and Family Services Society]
- Campbell River, BC [Campbell River Child Care Society]
- North Shore (North and West Vancouver), BC [North Shore Community Resources]
- Northeastern Saskatchewan (Melfort) [Northeast Regional Intersectoral Committee]
- Lorette, MB [Division Scolaire Franco-Manitobaine]
- Niagara Region (St. Catharines), ON [Early Childhood Community Development Centre]
- Ottawa, ON [Success by 6/6 Ans et Gagnant]
- Northern Region of Ontario (Wawa) [Wawa Parent-Child Play Centre]
- Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County (Lindsay), ON [Early Years Centre]
- Lower Hamilton, ON [Wesley Urban Ministries]
- Milton (Burlington), ON [Halton Child and Youth Services]
- Northumberland County (Port Hope), ON – need sponsor
- Point-de-L'Île de Montreal, QC [Centre 1, 2, 3, Go!]
- Yaldei (Montreal), QC [YALDEI Development Centre]
- Greater Saint John, NB [Family Plus/Life Solutions Ltd.]
- Cumberland County (Amherst), NS [Cumberland Mental Health Services]
- Halifax West and Area, NS [Sackville/Bedford Early Intervention Society]
- Western Nova Scotia (Kentville) [Nova Scotia Community College, Kingstec Campus]

Components of the Parent Interviews and Direct Assessments of Children Survey (PIDACS)

Parent Interview

This survey interviews the person most knowledgeable about the child, usually a parent or guardian, to obtain information on the family, the child's developments and the child's experiences in the community. This will usually be done by telephone. In some cases where a telephone is not available a face-to-face interview will be done.

Information will be collected from parents or guardians of the selected children through four components including...

1. Introduction and Household Roster – Information collected on demographics, dwelling characteristics, relationships of household members
2. Child Component – Questions related to health, communication, behaviour, parenting, childcare and sociodemographic characteristics
3. Adult Component – Questions related to labour force, health, education, income, family functioning, neighbourhood safety, social support and sociodemographic characteristics
4. Permission Component and Closing– Questions related to permission to conduct the direct child assessment, and permission to share data with HRSDC. Also includes a closing section on how to obtain information about the survey.

Child Direct Assessments

Children selected to participate in the assessment will complete the following three activities in their school. These activities will be administered by assessors¹ hired in each community.

1. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) assesses a child's receptive or hearing vocabulary. For this activity, children hear a word said aloud and are asked to point to one of four pictures that they believe corresponds to the word. This instrument was developed by Lloyd and Leota Dunn at the University of Hawaii, and has been widely used in large-scale data collections.
2. The Who Am I? activity measures developmental level, and is based on copying and writing tasks. The Who Am I? is designed to measure children's ability to conceptualize and to reconstruct a geometrical shape and to use symbolic representations, as illustrated by their understanding and use of conventional symbols such as numbers, letters and words. Children are asked to copy five shapes and to write their names, numbers, letters, words, and a sentence. The Who Am I? was developed by Dr. Molly de Lemos and colleagues at the Australian Council for Educational Research.
3. The Number Knowledge Test is designed to test the child's understanding of numbers, including understanding of quantity (more versus less), ability to count objects, understanding of number sequence, and ability to do simple arithmetic. The Number Knowledge Test was developed by Robbie Case at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

These three activities are used in UEY to provide a brief evaluation of the development of Kindergarten children in each community. This information is not a diagnosis of the development of an individual child but rather an indication of how the children in each community are doing as a group.

PIDACS Reports for Communities

Each community will be given a research report using the PIDACS data and tailored to their community. The report will be developed by Dr. Douglas Willms, the Canada Research Chair in Human Development (a partner of R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.). These reports will show the areas in which children are succeeding, and the areas in which children require more support. Ultimately, the reports will be used by community planners as tools to facilitate improved programs and services for young children and their families.

Results from the pilot UEY initiative are available online at www.hrsdc.gc.ca. One example report may be found at:

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/pkrf/publications/nlscy/uey/2003-002366/uey-abbotsford.pdf>

¹ Assessors are subject to a criminal records check and are hired and trained by Malatest & Associates Ltd.'s key project personnel