

## What is an Early Child Development Hub?

Early Child Development hubs will look quite different from one community to the next. Key to their development is their responsiveness to local needs. Specific service mix, location, and infrastructure will depend on the nature of the community and the characteristics of its children and families. There is no “one size fits all” model. In fact, to impose a common model would be detrimental to the already developing community programs.

There are however, key components or principles that are ideally part of a local hub model.

1. Hubs include the direct provision of at least two early child development or parent support services under the same roof, one of which will be a child care program (e.g. Infant/Toddler, preschool, etc.). Most existing hubs directly provide more than two services.
2. Hubs have relationships or connections with most other ECD, Child Care and parent support services in the community. The hub building acts as the centre of a broader web of services. Parents and children accessing services in the hub building will be able to gain information and seamless access to a continuum of services.
3. Hubs include a community development component. Due to the nature of hubs, there is a need for ongoing community development. This involves both outreach and development with children and families as well as ongoing relationship building with service providers and community stakeholders.
4. Hubs make use of available space(s) in the community. Hubs can be located in community centres, schools, neighbourhood houses, libraries, public housing complexes, or occasionally private space (e.g. malls). Communities will assess the existence of available and accessible spaces as a first step in developing hub programs.
5. Hubs are accessible. We know that there are many barriers that limit the accessibility of existing early child development services. Some of these are:

affordability, lack of transportation, hours of operation, language of service, and lack of information about services. Hubs are based within neighbourhoods, providing easy access to children and families and allowing for the creation of services to meet the needs of that neighbourhood.

6. Hubs are managed by a local intersectoral partnership group or coalition. Hubs require local “leadership”, but not a lead or single agency. It is important that the hubs bring together stakeholders from a variety of sectors to reduce the historical fragmentation between services. In many communities, this coordinating role is filled by the Children First coalition, a local child care advisory group, or ECD planning group.
7. Hub programs are based on research. Services provided in hubs are developed based on the understanding of “promising” practices for young children as well as on local research of children’s development (e.g. Early Development Instrument findings).
8. Hubs are hosted by government agencies or non-profit organizations.
9. Hubs have a stable base of funding. Ongoing program planning and development is dependent on there being core funding that is not tied to the traditional fee for service or subsidy models of funding child care.