

Trail Area Health & Environment Committee and Early Childhood Development

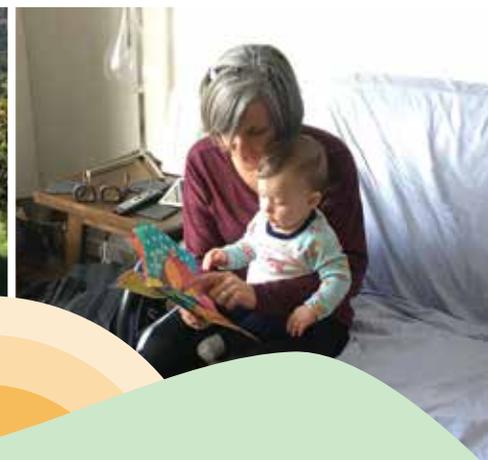
A child's early years are critical because this is when the brain develops most rapidly. Early childhood development strongly influences well-being throughout life.

Children are at the heart of the Trail Area Health & Environment Committee's work. Over the years, THEC's mandate of preventing children's exposure to lead has broadened to include a commitment to young children's healthy development.

In 2013, THEC launched the Healthy Families Healthy Homes Program (HFHH). It's a health promotion program that targets all expectant families and families with children aged 0-3 years in Trail and Rivervale. Each family receives two visits, one from an Interior Health Public Health RN (the Healthy Families visit) and one from a trained Home & Garden professional (Healthy Homes). Visits focus on prevention of lead exposure and healthy child development. Tools, information and support are brought into the home:

- Education, advice, a visual review of the home and yard, engagement of parents in conversations about their children's health, and referrals to other health or social services.
- Support for family actions to prevent lead exposure, such as vacuum cleaners, covered sandboxes and "Dust Buster" kits.
- Advice on topics such as keeping dust down, nutrition, handwashing, programs and services for young children, home renovation and removal of lead-based paint and home health hazards.
- Answering parents' questions and concerns.

**Research has found
that the potential
effect of enriched early
child development
opportunities can be as
much as 15 IQ points.**



Leadership and community collaboration

How has the Trail Area Health & Environment Committee (THEC) strengthened early childhood development in the community?

- Providing public education for community leaders and residents
- Building a broad base of community support
- Stimulating community action
- Developing an educated and engaged core group of community citizens
- Making a long-term commitment

Collaboration is key!

- Founding member of the Family Action Network (FAN)
- Collaborations that connect families and services and build relationships that increase participation in programs such as Lead Safe Renovation

Reducing exposure to lead and early childhood development go hand in hand.

The Trail Area Health & Environment Program relies on community support and participation. Key to this participation is THEC's engagement in early child development. It raises the program's profile in the community and strengthens relationships with local families and the organizations that support families. This, in turn, leads to support for environmental health initiatives of the program.

Bottom line: It's all about the kids.

**The THEC and
it's programs
keep early child
development
top-of-mind in
the public eye.**



FAMILY ACTION NETWORK (FAN)

FAN is the champion of community action on Early Childhood Development in the Lower Columbia region (Trail, Warfield, Montrose, Fruitvale and Rossland). FAN encourages community organizations to invest in families and young children. It provides support for organizations that help families and for initiatives that go beyond the scope of a single organization. It helps link families to each other and to community resources.

www.familyactionnetwork.ca



“... minimizing lead exposure in combination with improving other important early childhood factors such as parent-child interactions may be the best way to improve developmental outcomes.”

THE CONCLUSION OF RESEARCH PUBLISHED IN 2014 FOLLOWING 30-YEARS OF INTERVENTIONS IN THE SMELTER COMMUNITY OF PORT PIRIE, AUSTRALIA.