

## OVERVIEW OF THE REACH AND IMPACT OF THE HANDLE WITH CARE PROGRAM

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### WHAT IS HANDLE WITH CARE?

**Handle with Care (HWC) Program** is a simple, interactive, culturally-relevant, and trauma-informed program that promotes the mental health of young children from birth to 6 years and their parents or caregivers. Handle with Care is designed to reduce inequities and build on individuals' strengths, traditions and wisdom. The program assumes every parent and caregiver has problem-solving skills and resources and wants what is best for the children in their lives. It builds on participants' strengths and capacities, engages them and offers opportunities to maximize a sense of control over their environment. The program provides practical ways to apply research information in a context of interactive activities that promote mental health.



The program covers the basic 'building blocks' of mental health:



**Key Partners** include childhood development centres and service organizations, provincial and territorial governments in the Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The research & development of Handle with Care occurred in three Phases:

**PHASE 1:** adaptation of the content and delivery style of an existing HWC program for communities at-risk for mental health problems.

**PHASE 2:** Evaluation of the program's impact on the mental health and parenting practices of participants.

**PHASE 3:** Scaling up to reach high, sustained, and equitable coverage, at adequate levels of quality, in communities that needed the program.

Total Funding from Public Health Agency of Canada (2009-2018): \$3.6M

### IMPACT OF THE HWC PROGRAM

- Positive effects on participating parents' and caregivers' mental health. Parents and caregivers reported significant improvements in symptoms associated with negative mental health (languishing)
- Positive effects on parenting sense of competence. Parents reported that they gained confidence in their parenting practices and increased positive feelings about their relationships with their children or children in their care.
- Positive effects on self-care practices. Self-care and wellness practices improved and continued to improve over the life of the project.
- After the completion of the program, parents reported greater appreciation for diverse personalities and temperaments in the family, especially of their children.
- Parents reported that they gained more accurate perception of acting as role models for their children to exemplify acceptable ways of regulating and expressing emotions.
- They also reported positive change in family functioning. In some cases there were reports of improved relationships among adults in the family.
- Some of the Aboriginal participants mentioned that they can now forgive their parent for the lack of positive parenting, because they now understand that their parents were also stripped of the love of their families and did not have any role models in their lives.



\* In Phase 3, and as of November 2017, a total of 285 participants were enrolled in the HWC Research Program. 12% (35/285) of these participants were service providers or practitioners. According to the data available, during Phase 3 (2015-2018) of the project, the Handle with Care program reached over 1,000 individuals across Canada.

### Facilitators Trained by Province/Territory (January 2018)

