



## **Brantford/Brant Best Start Network Terms of Reference**

### **Vision**

Best Start is bringing out the best in all of us, our children, our families and our community.

### **Mission**

We lead a collaborative process to plan and implement strategies that support families and children prenatal to 12 years in Brantford and Brant to reach their full potential.

### **Scope**

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will continue to support and plan for a comprehensive integrated system of services that supports children, prenatal to twelve years of age and their families.

### **Goals**

The following general directions will be taken to achieve the vision:

- Programs are coordinated through Best Start and are available to all children without barriers resulting from income, transportation or health issues
- Education programs are available in all schools
- Parents take an active role in programming
- Earlier identification of children and earlier provision of services
- Resources and services are available with minimal or no waiting lists
- Early intervention occurs in order to facilitate rapid interventions
- Best Start is an integral part of the community
- The public, service providers and the media are aware of Best Start services and resources
- Advocate for adequate financial resources, staffing and supports
- Encourage all local and provincial partners to work together

### **Principles**

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will use the following guiding principles in the planning for Best Start. The Best Start planning will:

- Be based on identified community needs
- Ensure services are available, affordable and accessible for all
- Be child and parent oriented
- Respect diverse cultural, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds

- Include supports re: participation for children with physical, developmental, language, learning or behavioral difficulties
- Work in partnership with families
- Consider the needs of parents at home, work or in school
- Protect the best interests of children
- Ensure that a broad range of input affecting children is incorporated
- Include cross Ministerial input and collaboration
- Ensure quality services.

## **Accountability**

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will be accountable to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and to the community for planning and monitoring the implementation of Best Start early learning strategies in Brant. Specifically, as a collective, all members of the Network will share accountability in the development and monitoring of *the Brantford Brant Best Start Plans and other directives and early learning initiatives*.

The Brantford Brant Best Start Network will have an internal accountability mechanism in the form of a self-assessment that the Network will conduct annually to assess:

The terms of reference will be reviewed by a sub-committee annually and reconfirmed by the full Network.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- All members of the Brantford Brant Best Start Network will participate in planning and implementation.
- Provide advice on the best ways to organize and integrate services. They will be informed about the services available and the importance of early learning and care.
- Provide appropriate representation of the stakeholders that they represent and make decisions on behalf of the organization and/or sector they represent.
- Keep a global perspective when making decisions on what is best for the community.
- Undertake active participation in committee and/or task force work.
- Ensure appropriate preparation for each meeting and completion of assigned tasks.

## **Membership/Voting**

- MEMBERS: Members will reside or work in Brant County, and will include parent representatives, community representatives, stakeholder representatives and senior representatives of agencies providing early years services to children and families with children aged prenatal to 12.
- PARENT/ COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES: Up to three (3) parent representatives may be appointed members of the Network.

- **AGENCIES/STAKEHOLDERS:** must select one designated voting member who will be their representative. The designated voting member of an agency must be a senior staff at the agency and have the ability to make decisions and commitments on behalf of the organization. In the event that the designated voting member is unable to attend a meeting, that individual may assign an alternate
- **FUNDERS:** Funders shall participate on the Network in an ex-officio capacity and will participate in all discussions and decision-making, but will not have voting privileges.
- **OTHER AGENCY STAFF, CONSUMERS AND/OR INTERESTED PARTIES:** Individuals or agencies may approach the Chair to participate on the Network as an interested party. They may request to receive minutes and may attend meetings as guests and are not entitled to vote on decisions.
- **NETWORK AND SUB COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**  
The Network encourages the participation of any and all interested community stakeholders.

The Network has a number of Committees and Task Forces to assist it in fulfilling its mission “to plan, implement and monitor Best Start in Brantford/Brant in a way that reflects community priorities....” As illustrated in Appendix 3, the following Committees have been established:

- Aboriginal Advisory Committee
- Francophone Advisory Committee
- Service Integration Committee (SIC) Committee
- Child Care Advisory Committee

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will establish committees, task forces and/or working groups as deemed necessary. Such groups will designate a liaison to the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network and will consist of Brantford/Brant Best Start Network members and/or other community members as is relevant to the task. Each committee, task force or working group will be accountable to the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network through their work plans.

**See appendix 1** Brantford Brant/Best Start Suggested Membership Composition  
**See appendix 2** Communications Protocol

## **Structure of the Network**

### Qualification and Selection of Members

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will recruit members (on the basis of identified sectors/agencies) and invite their participation.

### Length of Term of Appointments

The terms of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network requires a three year commitment from agency stake holders. Parents/Community Representatives will be encouraged to participate for three years.

### Network Procedures and Operations Community Representatives

The Network will have two co-chairs, one of whom will be a senior representative of Child Care Services for the Corporation of the City of Brantford. The other co-chair of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will be selected by the Network Membership for a two year term with the option to serve an additional term.

## Executive Responsibilities

### Co-Chairs

The Co-Chair will:

- Co-Chair all Brantford/Brant Best Start Network meetings
- Prepare meeting agendas
- Ensure the Terms of Reference and other Brantford/Brant Best Start Network documents are up-to-date, and adhered to
- Oversee the orientation of new members as required
- Provide Leadership to the executive to ensure participation from all members.

### Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will be selected by the membership for a two-year term with the option to serve an additional term.

- Serve as the Co-Chair in the absence of the Co-Chair

### Secretary/Recorder

The Secretary/Recorder of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will be selected by the membership for a one-year term with the option to serve an additional term not exceeding a total of two consecutive years. Members may delegate Secretarial responsibilities.

The Secretary will ensure that:

- Meeting agendas are circulated to all members of Brantford/Brant Best Start Network
- Minutes of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network are recorded and circulated
- Meeting attendance is monitored
- All Brantford/Brant Best Start Network correspondence and records are maintained.

Other Executive positions may be established as deemed necessary.

## Minutes and Agendas

Minutes of all Brantford/Brant Best Start Network meetings will be distributed within fifteen working days to Network members with other relevant documentation attached.

Brantford/Brant Best Start Network members may refer items to the agenda by contacting the Co-Chair at least two weeks in advance of the next scheduled meeting. All meeting agendas will be forwarded to the membership one week in advance of the upcoming meeting, attached with this notice will be the second distribution of the minutes.

## Meetings

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will determine the schedule of dates, times and locations of meetings as required.

When meetings are called to order, no decisions or voting can be made unless a quorum of members are present. Meeting quorums shall be defined as 50% plus one of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network members.

### Media Spokesperson/Communications Protocol

#### Media

- Media Spokesperson: CMSM (Manager of Child Care Services, City of Brantford)
- Secondary Contact: Co-Chair of the Brantford Brant Best Start Network (BSN)
- Process for Press Contact- CMSM first, can refer to Co-Chair of BSN
- Duties for Media Spokesperson- interviews, press releases. These are seen at minimum by the Executive of the BSN before release.
- Seek out our own Network opportunities and agencies to keep Network informed

For complete communications protocol see Appendix 2.

### Conflict of Interest

All members of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will be encouraged to participate fully in the activities of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network. Disclosure of a conflict of interest, whether real, potential or apparent, must take place as soon as the individual becomes aware of the conflict. Conflict of interest refers to a situation where a member of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network speaks in favour of/or recommends a course of action which may have competing professional or personal interests or financially benefit them personally or the organization/agency with which they are associated. Such competing interests can make it difficult to fulfill his or her duties impartially. A conflict of interest exists even if no unethical or improper act results from it (e.g. the review and recommendation of Brantford/Brant Best Start Network proposals). The onus of responsibility will rest with each individual member to determine whether or not they are in a conflict of interest. In such instances, the member will clarify their concerns with the Co-Chair who will determine if the conflict of interest warrants precluding the member's further participation or debate of that portion of the meeting or determine if the member will not take part in the discussion of, or vote on any question in respect of the matter, or will forthwith leave the meeting or the part of the meeting during which the matter is under consideration. The member will not attempt in any way whether before, during or after the meeting to influence the voting on any such questions.

### Confidentiality

All meetings of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will be open to members of the general public and media. The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network does, however, reserve the right to hold in-camera sessions should the topic of discussion pertain to a property matter, information that may be the subject of a judicial or quasi-judicial hearing or inquiry, or the information pertains to a readily identifiable individual or group of individuals.

### Absences

Brantford/Brant Best Start Network members are asked to contact the Secretary or designate if they are unable to attend a meeting. If a member resigns, the vacancy will be filled at the discretion of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network.

### Use of Technology

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network reserves the right to use technology, where possible and practical, to conduct its business (e.g. the electronic transfer of meeting agendas and minutes, teleconferencing, voting etc.) and according to the communications protocol.

### Remuneration

Brantford/Brant Best Start Network members will serve without remuneration from the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network.

### Linkages

The Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will maintain linkages with other relevant planning bodies in the community. The nature and extent of these linkages may be altered from time to time as necessary and appropriate.

### **Decision-Making Process and Dispute Resolution**

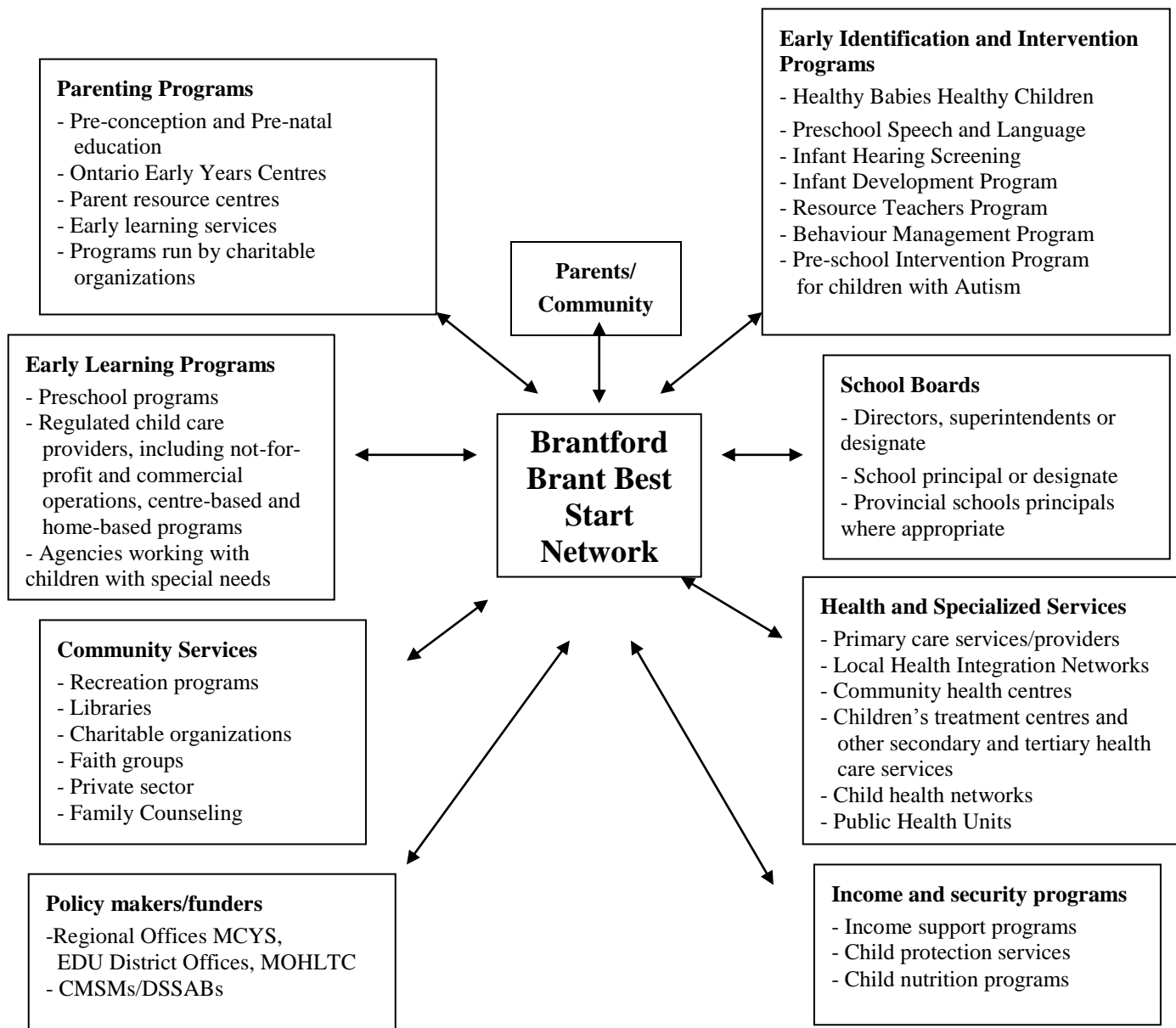
Members will work toward a consensus model for decision-making. If this is not possible, a simple majority vote will be held. A motion will be considered 'carried' when two thirds the voting representatives in attendance are in favour of the motion.

### **Signatures to the Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference and Membership of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network will be reviewed annually or as needed and members will sign re-commitment letter.

## Appendix 1

The **suggested membership** on the networks is listed below, recognizing that the uniqueness of the community may impact on the composition of the network.





## Appendix 2

# Communications Plan

### Purpose:

The purpose of this plan is to outline the parameters of communications of information regarding Brantford/Brant Best Start and the responsibilities of its members.

### Communication Plan Objective:

Communication will include, but not limited to, external communication strategies and internal communications processes among Best Start Network members. The plan will be an appendix of the Terms of Reference for the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network.

### Key Messages:

- Brantford/Brant Best Start is about Bringing Out the Best in All of Us.
- The key goal is to care for the children in our community in their early years so that they are ready to learn when they enter school and thus be able to be successful.
- To help every child in Brant realize their potential.
- Best Start is about supporting parents and families to give them the best opportunity for their child in the early years of life.
- Best Start strengthens and enhances partnerships so we can continue to build the best learning environment for families in our community.
- Best Start is a provincial program funding new child care and parenting services.

### Media:

The media spokesperson for the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network (BSN) is the Manager of Child Care Services, City of Brantford. All media contact and inquiries are to be directed to the Manager. The second contact person will be the Co-Chair of the Brantford/Brant Best Start Network. Process for contact will be Manager of Child Care Services first, then Co-Chair of BSN.

The duties include, but are not limited to; Media Spokesperson- interviews, press releases. Such correspondences are seen at a minimum by the Executive of the BSN before release.

### Internal Communications to Best Start Network:

The following represents the internal communications (both electronically and through print materials) for the BSN:

- Communications; agenda, minutes are the responsibility of the Co-Chair or designate
- Participating members of the BSN receive all correspondences but other interested parties (or Minutes Only Members) will receive agendas and approved minutes only
- The BSN will address confidentiality issues as they arise
- A confidentiality disclaimer will be added to all email correspondence of the members of the Network which includes:

“This message is intended only for the use of the individual or entity to which it is addressed, and may contain information that is privileged, confidential. If you have received this message in error, please delete it and any attachments immediately and notify the Co-Chair of the Brantford-Brant Best Start Network at [beststart@brantford.ca](mailto:beststart@brantford.ca) . Thank you “



### External Communications to Best Start Network:

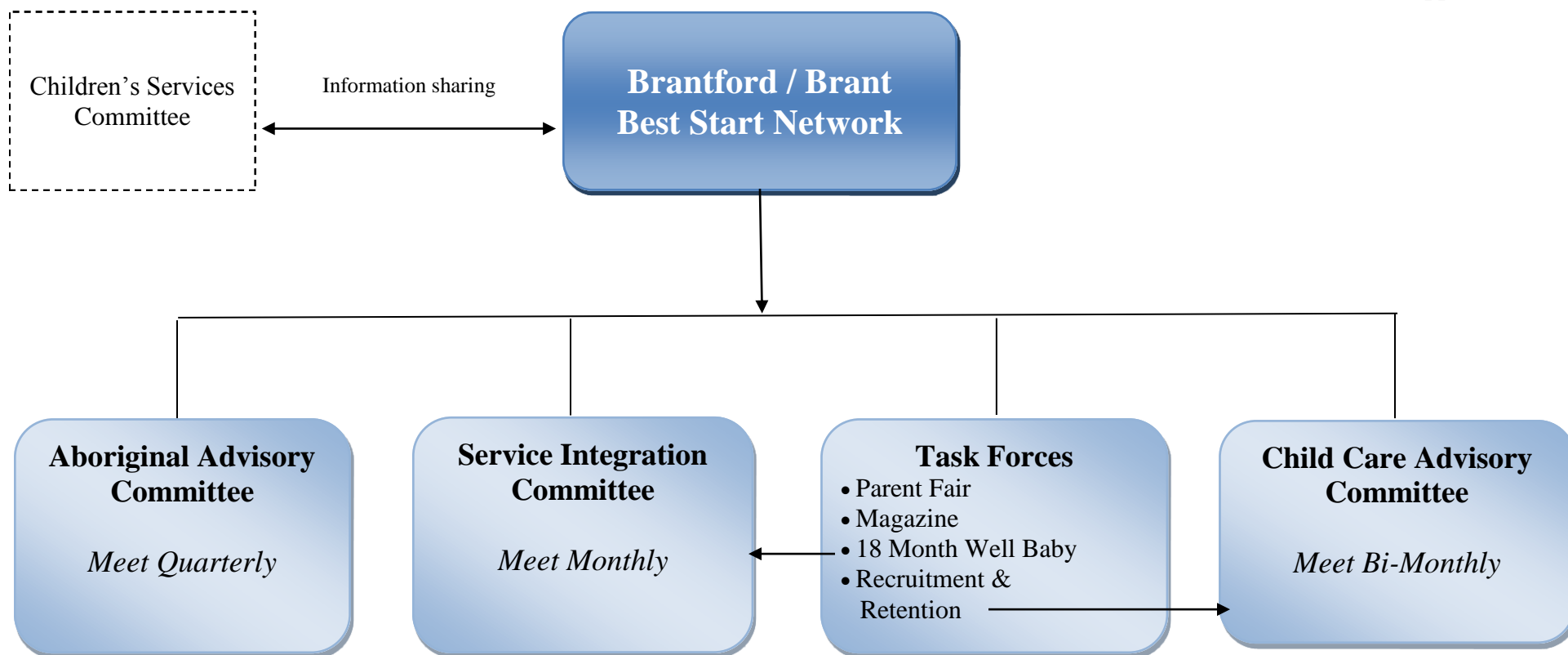
The following represents the external communications (both electronically and through print materials) for the BSN:

- Anyone can share the key messages or distribute approved marketing information
- Meetings, requests for presentations and other requests are to go through the Co-Chair of the BSN
- Letters of support can go from agencies but not on behalf of the BSN unless this has been agreed to by majority vote of the Network
- Letters of support need to be drafted by the Co-Chair of a subcommittee and can be reviewed by the full Network to be confirmed by the next full meeting or by executive and email if time does not allow. The approved format will then be sent from the Best Start Network Co-Chair
- Use of the Best Start logo is approved in communications of other agencies associated with the Best Start Network
- All Early Learning and Parenting Sites will be branded with common external signage “Best Start Early Learning and Parenting Centre” and will have signage inside the programs identifying the current operator
- Child Care Centres can indicate “Developed through Best Start” but are not permitted to designate sites as “Best Start Child Care”
- Members approached by corporations, politicians, member of council, etc, must refer contacts to the BSN as per the media guidelines. It is the member’s responsibility to inform the Network.
- If events/media coverage by the above is about your own agency, the members of the Network are expected to inform the Media Spokesperson and Co-Chair of the BSN if the matter may pertain to any part of the BSN plans.

### Website/Email:

- Brantford/Brant Best Start website; [www.ourbeststart4brant.ca](http://www.ourbeststart4brant.ca) and email; [beststart@brantford.ca](mailto:beststart@brantford.ca)

are hosted, maintained and monitored by Child Care Services with the support of the City of Brantford. Any changes, additions or corrections should be directed to that office.



**Roles**

**Best Start Network (BSN)** = System planning, funding decisions, decisions from recommendations.

**Service Integration Committee (SIC)** = Service planning, recommendations to the BSN on services and programs, planning and implementing integrated services in the Early Learning and Parenting Centre (ELPC).

**Francophone Advisory Committee** is INACTIVE.