

Community Development Opportunities

Support for Families with Vulnerable Newborns

Families with newborns who are premature or medically vulnerable often experience isolation upon returning to their own home. The time they may have spent in the neonatal intensive care is stressful but it also characterized by ready access to medical support and a sense of community among the families who are often together for some time. Upon returning home it is often recommended that the family limit taking the baby into social situations; other family members are sometimes reluctant to care for a vulnerable baby. The result may be that the parents are stressed and have little opportunity for respite.

Could you:

- ❑ Organize some local nurses or licensed practical nurses who are either retired or working part-time to volunteer as a support to such a family. A few hours a week to give Mom and Dad a break would be significant in that family's life. Perhaps that person could also teach other family members what they need to know to feel more comfortable providing care for the child.
- ❑ Organize a secure chat room through your agency's website for isolated parents to access to share their experiences, questions, and collective wisdom.

Mentors for new Moms and Dads

Having someone to share stories with, and ask questions of, even when the child is healthy and strong is important to help parents maintain their energy and perspective. Unfortunately, Moms and Dads are often separated from their extended families by great distances.

Could you:

- ❑ Appeal to a local senior's group to identify people who may be able to help out even a few hours a week. Going to the park with a new Mom, helping her out by caring for the baby while she has special time with her older children, just having a visit and an opportunity to talk with another adult all are meaningful when your own family is far away.
- ❑ Organize a secure chat room through your agency's website for isolated parents to access to share their experiences, questions, and collective wisdom.
- ❑ Organize a Dad's group for new fathers supported by men in the community who have more experience.
- ❑ Organize some Dads and Kids activities – opportunities for men to be with one another and engage with their children can also provide opportunities for informal mentorship and information sharing.
- ❑ Create opportunities for young and/or single Moms to be mentored by more experienced moms – support could be by phone, email, or visits.
- ❑ Recruit some retired or part-time teachers who may be willing to volunteer to tutor or simply support the learning of Moms and Dads who are trying to upgrade their education. High school students may also be interested in volunteering in such a role.

If you have other ideas you are willing to share please email the Provincial Coordinator at susan.patenaude@capitalhealth.ca – your ideas will be added to the list.