

Reach Child and Youth Development Society (REACH) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families and fostering children's development. We provide a range of programs for children and youth, including family-centered speech-language therapy (SLP), occupational therapy (OT), and physiotherapy (PT) for children up to kindergarten entry. These services help children build essential communication, motor, and daily living skills, while empowering families with the knowledge and tools to support their child's progress in everyday activities.

## 1. Summary of actions and achievements for the reporting period.

REACH continued to develop and enhance therapy (speech, occupational and physio therapy) services in 2024. Collaboration with the Delta School District ensured smooth Kindergarten transitions, and our group services and therapy blocks significantly increased the number of families served, particularly in Speech-Language Pathology (SLP).

New Infant Development Program (IDP) Playgroups were launched in North Delta, alongside ongoing drop-in family groups. Our therapists continued attending these groups enabling the early identification of children with developmental issues.

REACH Physiotherapists, in partnership with the Delta School District and Delta Gymnastics, established an adaptive gymnastics program for children with complex development needs. Our physiotherapist provide support to foster successful community inclusion.

Our commitment to diverse and flexible service delivery models, including individual therapy, group programs, and block services, continues to enhance outcomes for children and families across Delta.

In accordance with our commitment to providing comprehensive and seamless services, REACH continued its successful transition plan for children entering kindergarten in September 2024.

## 2. Statistics (2024)

In 2024, demand for early intervention therapies remained high, with a steady influx of referrals. The program served 295 children; many received support from multiple therapies. Speech-language therapy (SLP) supported 238 children, occupational therapy (OT) 141, and physiotherapy (PT) 91.

Waitlists continued to reflect the demand for services, while also reflecting increased service provision by the program, with an average of 61 children awaiting SLP, 54 for OT, and 7 for PT each month.

| Discipline    | Children Served 2020 | Children Served 2021 | Children Served 2022 | Children Served 2023 | Children Served 2024 |
|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| SLP           | 134                  | 116                  | 146                  | 144                  | 238                  |
| OT            | 95                   | 90                   | 135                  | 90                   | 141                  |
| PT            | 60                   | 61                   | 75                   | 78                   | 91                   |
| <b>Totals</b> | 289                  | 267                  | 230                  | 203                  | 295                  |

| Discipline    | Average Number on Waitlist 2020 | Average Number on Waitlist 2021 | Average Number on Waitlist 2022 | Average Number on Waitlist 2023 | Average Number on Waitlist 2024 |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| SLP           | 46                              | 54                              | 70                              | 74                              | 61                              |
| OT            | 36                              | 50                              | 52                              | 49                              | 54                              |
| PT            | 3                               | 7                               | 7                               | 10                              | 7                               |
| <b>Totals</b> | 85                              | 111                             | 129                             | 133                             | 122                             |

### Kindergarten Transition Statistics

In the year 2024, a total of 61 children were discharged from REACH therapies as they prepared to embark on their educational journey in kindergarten. Some of these children received more than one therapy service. Among them, 27 children who benefitted from OT, 27 from PT, and 44 from SLP services.

### Location of Operation

SLPs, OTs and PTs provided services in the Lois E Jackson Kinsmen Centre for Children in Ladner, the Play and Learn Centre in the North Delta Rec Centre, North Delta House, in family homes, daycares, and preschools in Tsawwassen, Ladner and North Delta and in community settings such as Delta Gymnastics.

### Aggregate hours dedicated to the provision of service in 2024

Based on a 35-hour work week, the full-time employee equivalents (FTEs) for the therapies program were 6.23.

The 6.23 FTEs are funded in the following way:

- 4.98 FTEs by the Ministry of Children and Family Development
- 1.25 FTEs is a combination of funding from the Municipality of Delta, the Community Gaming Grant, and the Gift of Speech Fundraising Campaign
- The 1.25 FTEs are allocated as follows: 0.4 to SLP, 0.35 to OT, and 0.50 to PT

## 3. Applying an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) lens

Our early intervention therapies is committed to ensuring equitable access to services for all families, regardless of their background, language, or cultural identity. We recognize the diversity within our community and actively implement measures to reach and support racialized and immigrant populations in meaningful ways.

### Demographic Impact

In 2024, our program served a highly diverse population:

- 33% of our clients identified as South Asian/Indo-Canadian
- 24% identified as White
- 6% identified as First Nations
- 6% identified as Asian/Chinese
- Less than 1% each identified as Hispanic, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and African American
- 22% of families did not specify their ethnicity
- 8% identified as Other

### **Culturally Responsive Service Delivery**

To ensure that families from diverse backgrounds have equitable access to services, we have implemented several key initiatives:

#### Community Outreach and Family Groups:

REACH facilitates IDP drop-in family groups where therapists participate to provide guidance and early intervention support to parents. These groups serve as a bridge to introduce families to available services and help them understand their child's developmental needs. These groups help marginalized families whose culture stigmatizes disability with a negative lens, by educating and encouraging peer-peer parent support.

We have dedicated parent groups in English and in Punjabi, providing culturally relevant information empowering families in the South Asian community. REACH also provides support groups for families with children with Down Syndrome, FASD, ADHD and complex behaviours.

#### Family Navigator Program:

This program, available in both English and Punjabi, helps families understand and navigate the community-based support systems available to them.

#### Language and Interpretation Support:

We recognize language as a key barrier for many families and ensure that translation and interpretation services are available when required. By providing culturally appropriate and understandable services, we minimize barriers and maximize the effectiveness of our interventions.

#### Diverse Staffing Approach:

Our hiring practices prioritize linguistic and cultural diversity among staff, which enables us to better serve families from various backgrounds. Having team members who speak multiple languages fosters trust and facilitates clearer communication between therapists and families. Through these efforts, we strive to create an inclusive and equitable service environment where all families, regardless of their racial, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds, feel supported and empowered in their journey of early intervention. By continuously assessing and enhancing our outreach strategies, we remain committed to serving our diverse community effectively and ensuring that no family is left behind.

## **4. Emerging challenges, needs and trends**

REACH was certified under the Health Sciences Association Union in 2024 as was recommended by the provincial government to address significant wage gaps for our staff. We anticipate that unionization will strengthen our recruitment and retention efforts. While this change brings benefits such as improved compensation to our staff, the shortage of therapists remains a persistent challenge across the province. The demand for services continues to outpace available professionals, making it critical to explore new strategies to attract and retain skilled therapists to support children and families effectively.

Additionally, saw a restructuring of REACH's autism program due to challenges associated with Ministry's individualized funding model for children with autism. The program now has an increased emphasis on parent education and group intervention.

REACH is anticipating further economic hardships due to the introduction of tariffs, as many of our families are already struggling financially. In addition, BC and Canada's escalating deficits, will impact government's capacity to address services for children and youth with special needs.

## **5. Additional Notes**

REACH specializes in supporting children with complex needs (autism, significant behaviour challenges, Down Syndrome, other syndromes and medical conditions where children and youth have identified mental health and developmental needs, children with palliative conditions). These children have few opportunities to access the community activities that are available to their peers due to their high support needs. REACH would welcome an opportunity to work with the City of Delta to provide increased adaptive programs for these children so that they can become meaningful community members.

## **6. Request for next year**

Audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2023/2024 are attached.

REACH will continue to provide therapy services to children in the community of Delta up to kindergarten entry. These services include assessments, individual program planning and intervention, parent support and education and coordination with other service providers. REACH will also continue to strive to find creative ways to manage waitlists and provide services to as many families as possible given our resources.

REACH requests the continuation of the City of Delta's annual grant of \$50,274, which enables REACH to attract a further \$80,000 annual funding (2022/2023 fiscal) to the community for therapy services from the Gaming Commission. Our proposal for funding does not include any funding for cost of living increases.