

PACE Family Program

Handbook



**Working together
to foster emotional well being
in our community through
connection, support and education.**

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1. WHAT IS THE PACE PROGRAM ?

The PACE Program is an early intervention and educational centre for children and families, primarily funded by the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD). The PACE Program, operated by the PACE Child & Family Society, has been a resource for children and families since 1984. PACE offers a range of services to support young children who struggle with significant emotional and / or behavioural challenges, their families and the community. PACE is a CARF-accredited agency.

SUMMARY OF SERVICES OFFERED:

- ❖ **PACE Family Program** - including a preschool component & family support.
- ❖ **Outreach Support Services** - to daycares, preschools & school-aged programs.
- ❖ **Child Therapy ~ Play, Art & Expressive Arts**
As a sub-contract with Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV) and Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS), PACE offers therapy to children aged 3-10. Referrals are made to FSGV or VACFSS directly.
- ❖ **Supporting Healthy Transitions Program**
Supporting children and families when children move from foster homes to birth, adoptive or other foster homes.
- ❖ **Training to early childhood educators, parents, foster parents and other professionals working with children and families**



MISSION:

The PACE Program provides a range of quality early intervention and prevention services to support and empower young children with emotional and/or behavioural challenges, and their families. We offer systemic, collaborative and innovative programs, working in partnership with parents, caregivers, educators and other professionals, to build capacity and strengthen community. We strive to be a leader in the field by being responsive and continually improving agency.

2. WHAT IS THE PACE FAMILY PROGRAM ?

The PACE Family Program is for children aged 3 to 5 with significant emotional and / or behavioural challenges, and their families. This program offers prevention based services provided through a play-based therapeutic preschool program that focuses on the emotional, social, cognitive and physical growth of the child. Parental involvement is central to the program in working together to support the child's skill development and the child/parent relationships. Parents are offered a number of opportunities for involvement.

Why the importance of play? Play is the natural language of children. It is through play that children express themselves and “talk” to us. Through play, children learn at every stage of their development as well as gain an understanding of their world and their emotions.



The work with the children at PACE involves creating a safe, consistent and comfortable environment where they are able to express their feelings in constructive ways (e.g. through words, play, art and other appropriate expressive means). These experiences help children gain the inner control and self confidence needed for healthy development and the establishment of positive peer relations. Research has shown that early therapeutic intervention is critical to allow children to experience a more successful integration and continuation in the school system.

The program hopes to create a safe and comfortable place where parents can join their children and partner with the teachers. We value and embrace diversity and work to create an environment that is accepting and respectful of all people.

a) **FAMILY PARTICIPATION**

Believing in Parents as the Child’s Most Important Resource:



PACE is a family program and as such, requires the involvement of the significant family members in the child’s life. The child’s emotional well being is primarily determined by their caregivers. Professionals providing support and guidance to the child have minimal long-term impact if the caregivers are not partners in the process.

Healthy attachment to a primary caregiver is the cornerstone of healthy development. We believe that all parents want the best for their children and care deeply about their well being. By nurturing and supporting this aspect, their innate strength as parents becomes ignited and has a chance to bloom.

At PACE, we help parents identify their abilities and support them to expand on these and build on their potential, so they can become the best possible parents they can be.

Importance of the Attachment Needs of Children:

The child's attachment needs are addressed through a variety of vehicles including specific work between parent / primary caregiver and the child as well as through the relationship building of the teachers and therapists with the child. PACE staff are trained and supported to understand the importance of attachment, and to share this in their work with parents, caregivers and professionals. They role model secure attachment in their support work, showing how to be present and attentive to the child, by providing compassion, boundaries, structure and safety. This attachment experience where the child feels heard, understood and cared for, creates an experience of trust and safety, thereby lessening their anxiety and worries and increasing their capacity to feel safe, learn and develop an integrated sense of self.



Family involvement is a crucial part of the program as it allows parents and staff to develop a partnership in working together.

Your wisdom and input regarding your child is critical. You will have a "team" working specifically with you and your child. They will meet with you to talk about your child's current needs, areas for development and how you will be involved.

There are a number of options available to families to share and explore the challenges and successes you experience in parenting your child/ren. With support from the PACE team, you will be offered ways to practice and develop your skills. These include opportunities to discuss and address parenting as well as personal issues.

Here are some of the ways that significant people in the child's life can participate in the Family Program:

1. *Participation in the Preschool* - This is an opportunity to share in the child's experience by joining their play. This can also be a time to observe directly some of the strategies used at PACE or try some with the support of PACE staff. It is also a time to come in and have fun!
2. *Observation of Preschool Program* – Through "live" video observation, parents, extended family and foster parents are encouraged to join one of the PACE staff in observing their children so as to gain a different understanding and strategies. We can also videotape you and your child playing together which can then be viewed with PACE staff to see strengths, share ideas and discuss areas for further support and work.
3. *In-Home Support* - This support is provided to parents and foster parents to address parenting issues and strategies (i.e. limit setting, bedtime, logical consequences...) and/or to help families access community resources.
4. *Family Sessions* - Parenting is one of the hardest jobs we will ever do and we believe parents, foster parents and caregivers need some time to talk about the personal stresses and challenges (and of course joys!) of parenting. These discussions can be set up at times that work for you. Support and/or counselling for parents, foster parents and other primary caregivers is available and provides an opportunity to address both parenting as well as personal and family issues.

5. *Parent Support and Education Group* - Here is an opportunity for parents to come together to discuss some of your strengths and challenges around parenting. We have intermittent “parent events”. These events can include listening to a guest speaker, watching a video or getting together to talk about an issue common to many parents. So bring along your ideas/questions and join us!

Note: the preschool component operates Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to 11:45 am, September to the third week in July. Bus service is available within certain geographic areas in Vancouver.

**b) YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES
Parent/s & Guardian/s**

- Once you have decided to start participation, you will then define how you and your family will be involved with the program. It is your responsibility to participate/attend as planned. **This is the key way we can work together to move towards your hopes and goals for your child and family.**
- If you are unable to attend on occasion, please contact the program in advance. This can allow us to offer other times / days to other parents.
- If you'd like to revisit and/or discuss your commitment, please talk to your support team so we can sort out the best options of participation for you.
- Your participation is an essential part of this program. As such, if your participation does not happen, we discuss whether this is the right program for you at this time and support you to find other options.



*Please also see our “**Agency Outline**” for more details regarding PACE’s commitment and your rights as a participant in PACE Services.*

c) WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THE PACE TEAM

Each child and family will have a “**support team**” which will include a Teacher from the preschool program (PACE Child & Family Worker), a Child Therapist and where needed/appropriate, Family Counsellor. The PACE Child & Family Worker, who will be there to offer more intensive support, both at PACE or, at times, in-home, will be your primary PACE support person. To ensure the best possible support to your child and family, important issues that impact the work with your child are shared with the rest of the PACE

Family Program team. This allows for each member of the team to understand your child's needs and to have a consistent and appropriate approach to supporting them and you when you are in the preschool program. Strict confidentiality is maintained at all times.

d) COMMUNICATION

Your small team works closely with all the other members of the PACE team to provide a supportive and consistent plan in working with your child. We strongly believe families are the children's most valuable resource, and as such, we see family input and involvement as critical.

Regular updates about the child and events in their life is critical information to supporting you and your child.

e) WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

We value our connection with parents, foster parents, extended family and other significant people, including related professionals, and strive to provide a "wrap around" service that fits for each family. Our goal is to provide a service which is accountable to you and those involved with your child. We look forward to collaborating and working in partnership with those involved in supporting your child and family.



In situations where the MCFD is involved, your Social Worker is seen as part of your support team. In addition to Social Workers, PACE works in partnership with resource workers, family counsellors from the Family Preservation Program and teachers, as well as other significant professionals. In situations where the child is in foster care, PACE works closely with the foster parents, as well as with the birth parents (if they are involved in the child's life, and with Ministry approval).

We will meet with you and the significant people supporting your child and family soon after you begin the program and will continue to connect with these resources throughout the year. Your participation in these meetings is essential in ensuring that all service providers are working together in the best interests of your family.

f) **DEFINING GOALS & BUILDING A SUPPORT PROGRAM – “Individual Plan”**

Your input, along with ideas from PACE and other significant professionals will be included as we build a support program. This includes using an assessment tool at the beginning of participation to help identify areas for your child. Together, we will consider the areas of focus (goals) for your child and family, and then create an "**Individual Plan**" of how we will work together. We will review these throughout the year and welcome and encourage your input and ideas. The assessment tool is again completed at the end of the school year, or near the end of your participation as a way to reflect on change.



g) **REVIEWING PARTICIPATION, GOALS & SATISFACTION OF SERVICE FOR YOUR CHILD & FAMILY**

Your team will *check in with you regarding how the program is meeting you and your child's needs*. These check-ins happen throughout the year so we can review how the program is working for your family. *Your child's progress will also be reviewed regularly with you, including review of the “Individual Plan” we created together.*



Together, we will consider what would be the best options for your child. Some children leave PACE before they start kindergarten; some children start their kindergarten year while attending PACE; while other children delay their school entry to help them consolidate their skills to help make their transition to school more successful. If the teachers consider your child as being ready to transition from PACE, they will first meet with you to discuss this. Then, we will also ask you to be part of a conference that may include all of the professionals involved with the child. The goal of this conference will be to discuss the child's progress, summer plans and preparations for school, where applicable.

When children are assessed as ready to leave PACE, outreach consultation and support may be offered to preschool and/or daycare programs to help with the child's integration into these settings. PACE consultation is also offered to schools for one year to the school system to facilitate the transition of children entering kindergarten or grade one.

h) **IF YOU NEED TO LEAVE US - WITHDRAWAL**

We recognize that events and changes in a family's life may impact their participation. *If it is not the right timing for you and your family to participate in the program you may be able to go back on the waitlist, and let us know when you are ready.* It is important to recognize that



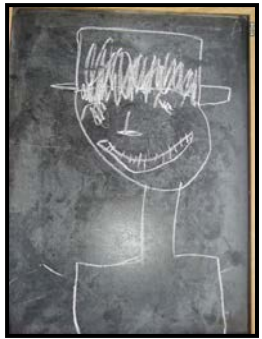
future placement is dependent on a number of factors including, the age of your child. Consistent participation / involvement is a program requirement as it provides us with the essential opportunity to work together (please refer to 2 b).

If you feel at some point that you no longer wish to be participate, or if regular participation becomes a challenge, we ask that you meet with us to discuss your decision and work together to plan a transition for your child from PACE. We hope to give you and your child a positive ending to your participation and want to acknowledge your child and family with a planned goodbye.

3. PRESCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

please also document titled, "Preschool Component – General Information" for more details

The staff provide a rich and stimulating program that responds and adapts to the needs of individual children. We offer children and families a dedicated and well trained staff who are caring and nurturing and whose expertise and commitment are valued. The staff have a range of qualifications with a focus on supporting children with emotional and/or behavioural challenges and their families. Each person brings a unique composite of skills and is offered professional development opportunities through PACE. First Aid (Emergency Level, Child Care) as well as a criminal record check, is a requirement for all staff.



Within the preschool environment, there are a number of elements including:

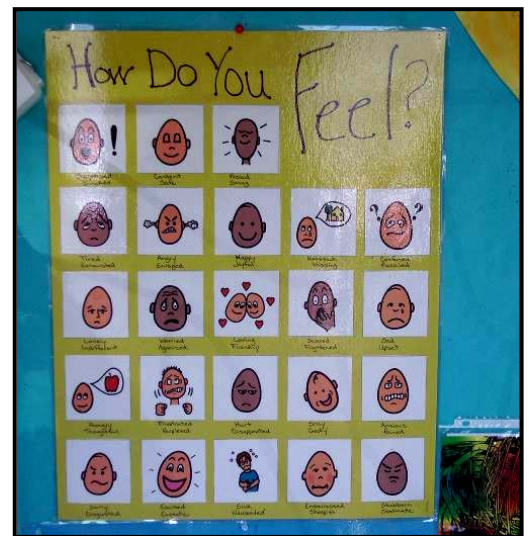
- ✧ **The teachers are actively engaged in play, facilitating interactions with peers and play ideas.** Through play, the child learns, grows and develops. The teachers look for ways to enrich the children’s play skills by providing the right opportunities and materials.
- ✧ **The teachers also look for ways to give voice to the child’s feelings which may be driving the behaviour.** We refer to this as “dialoguing” or “seeing and wondering”, (e.g. “I wonder if Billy hit his friend because his friend took his toy and that made him mad.”) In addition, through dialoguing, adults can support each other, problem solve together and with the child. If the child knows why they are upset, this can help them feel understood, and this helps them calm, which lowers the emotional intensity thereby making the situation less confrontational. If the child is not aware as to why they are upset, “dialoguing” can help them understand the underlying processes. The goal is to help develop the children’s awareness of their feelings and their impact on their behaviour, and to expand their ability to express themselves appropriately.



- ✧ **The teachers and therapists also provide children with a range of experiences and outlets** to help them in communicating and expressing their feelings and thoughts. In addition to “dialoguing about their feelings”, art and play are used as vehicles of expression. Also, a range of sensory materials such as things to squish and crunch as well as items to care for and nurture (i.e. plants and

favourite stuffed animals / puppets) are used to allow for the expression of feelings. The lower child to staff ratio at PACE allows us to have opportunities to work with children individually or in small groups. This provides children with a safe environment to help them both express and/or contain difficult feelings.

- ✧ **Providing a range of activities and materials**, (e.g. art experiences, books, house corner, music & movement, water & sand, science & discovery, play dough, blocks puzzles & manipulatives, gross motor & outdoor play), to provide unlimited creative opportunities for discovery, challenge and exploration as well as a safe environment for building self-confidence, self-awareness and supportive relationships with peers.
- ✧ **Incorporating emergent curriculum** – bringing the child’s interests and curiosities into the preschool programming and taking joy in the experience of learning.
- ✧ **School readiness skills** – getting ready for school, with the goal of making it a successful transition. This includes, in addition to developing social skills, building on their cognitive abilities (e.g. knowing the alphabet, counting, colours, developing pencil grasps, group skills and appropriate participation).
- ✧ The **staff create and maintain a safe and respectful environment for all** children and adults at PACE. No physical aggression between children will be allowed. We are responsible for the safety of each child and as such, staff will intervene immediately. Every child is taught to respect the feelings, rights and property of others and has the right to expect this of others. We support children learning appropriate outlets for emotional expression.
- ✧ **Children are offered positive reinforcement and encouragement to develop their skills, self-esteem, self-discipline and self-worth. We guide children to ensure their safety and other’s safety along with helping them develop appropriate social skills and empathy.**



The program uses a variety of techniques to facilitate appropriate interactions and behaviours. These include:

- ✧ Creating an environment to minimize challenging behaviours.
- ✧ Having appropriate expectations according to their developmental stage.
- ✧ Modeling appropriate behaviour / interactions with peers and adults.
- ✧ Defining feelings and helping children learn how to express their feelings in appropriate ways. This includes putting out hypotheses as to how they might be feeling, giving language and providing concrete images to help children gain an awareness of their feelings.
- ✧ Stating clear limits, using natural and logical consequences.
- ✧ Respecting, recognizing and acknowledging feelings, also when limit setting.
- ✧ Redirecting behaviour.

- ✧ Helping children learn to problem solve and develop conflict resolution skills and encouraging them to use these. Supporting reparation where appropriate.
- ✧ Our “tree room” is a quiet space, with a range of materials, where children can go when having difficulty being with the group or when having difficult feelings (*i.e. struggling to calm, feeling angry, tearful...*).



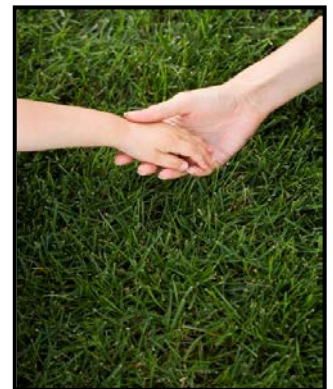
Please talk to your support team if you have any questions or concerns about how we work with children who are feeling distressed or upset and who may need extra support and/or additional strategies to help them settle. (e.g. deep breathing, therapeutic outlets for feelings, etc.)

There may be times when a child's rights may be restricted or revoked, for example if a child is acting aggressively towards others. In this situation, a child would be supported and contained for both the safety of themselves and others. They may also then experience limits in their choices of activities. They regain rights and privileges after talking with staff about what happened, including exploring how they were feeling and what could have been done differently. This would also include follow up with others involved in aggressive moment so all are able to feel safe together and move on.

For more information regarding PACE's philosophy in working with challenging behaviours, please see our policy, “*Behavioural Guidance and Containment*” or talk to one of the staff directly for more information about how we work to keep everyone safe. This is reviewed as part of your orientation to the PACE Family Program.

4. CHILD THERAPY - Healing through Playing & Creating

While the children are participating in the preschool component of the Family Program, we provide many different opportunities for children to learn and heal through play, art and expressive arts. In addition, each of the children has a weekly 45 minute session in the “playroom” or, as it is sometimes called, the “special room”, with one of the PACE Child Therapists. **Once an initial meeting with the child therapist takes place and parent/guardian consent is obtained, the child's visits to the playroom begin.**



Play is the natural language of children. It can be difficult for children to put their feelings into words. Through play children are able to express their feelings, explore their world and learn. In the playroom, children can discover solutions to problems in a safe and therapeutic environment. Play allows children to create a world that they can understand, in which they can practice social skills, overcome frightening or confusing feelings and work through and resolve past traumas. Just as it is helpful for adults to talk to someone about their worries and concerns, it is helpful for children to have an opportunity to play out accumulated feelings of worry, frustration, insecurity, aggression, fear and confusion.

Through the child therapy experience and the relationship with the therapist, the child's self-esteem is enhanced and they begin to develop inner controls and the ability to make more appropriate decisions. Child therapy provides children with an important outlet for the feelings that often underlie their challenging behaviours. By releasing these feelings, the frequency of these difficult behaviour is reduced. In these ways, play therapy helps ready children for school and builds their ability to learn. Child therapy is useful with children who have had a wide range of experiences; these might include the birth of a new sibling, the loss of a parent or other important family member.

You are welcome to come and visit the playroom. Your child's therapist will talk to you before your child starts. You will sign a consent form for your child to participate in child sessions with an assigned therapist. Please remember that you are welcome to contact your child's therapist or any of the PACE teachers if at any time you have any questions.

5. CREATING A SAFE & RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT

We have a number of policies and procedures that outline how services will be delivered. The details of each of these is available for you to review at PACE. Here is a brief overview of our policies regarding how we keep everyone who comes to PACE safe, both physically and emotionally.

a) **EMERGENCIES**

The staff will review with you the emergency procedures soon after you start. These procedures and exit plans in case of fire, earthquake or other emergency are posted near all exits in the building. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the plan and if you have any questions, please ask the staff. There will be emergency drills happening throughout the year to help children/parents and staff be familiar with procedures in different situations.



In the event of an emergency, (or serious maintenance problem at the centre making it not possible or undesirable for the program to operate), the children will be evacuated from the building to the Marpole Community Centre. The PACE Staff will then contact you or your designated emergency contact.

MARPOLE COMMUNITY CENTRE
990 West 59th Avenue (at Oak)
(604) 257-8180
Email: Marpoleco@vancouver.ca



If a child is injured or hurt and requires medical attention, staff will ensure the child is escorted to nearest hospital. The guardian / emergency contact will immediately be contacted.

b) **TRANSPORTATION**



We ensure that all children are safely secured in car seats or booster seats while travelling to and from PACE on the PACE bus, or when being transported by any staff member. This requirement is also mandated by law.

We also require all parents who are travelling with us on the PACE bus or who are with staff in their cars to wear seatbelts at all times. *If you are not willing to wear your seatbelt, we will not be able to offer you transportation.*

c) **CHILD SAFETY**

- ✧ Every child is taught to respect the feelings, rights and property of others.
- ✧ No child is permitted to leave the building or the area where the children are currently playing without a staff member.
- ✧ There are clear boundaries regarding physical contact.
- ✧ All staff have clear guidelines and responsibilities to ensure child safety while participating in PACE services.



Please talk to staff/your support team about your family's culture and practices. You can also review our "Guidance Policy" and our "Contact, Containment & Release of Feelings Policy" for more information on PACE's philosophy.

d) **AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR**

If a child or adult is upset or distressed, staff will assist to help calm and problem solve. If you are feeling upset and need a break, please let us know how we can support you or what would be helpful in the moment. Staff are trained and available to support you. They are required to help maintain a safe and respectful environment for all.

If a child is distressed and aggressive, we have a policy we follow to help keep them, other children and adults safe. No physical aggression between children will be allowed. We are responsible for the safety of each child and as such, staff will intervene immediately. For more details on how we facilitate appropriate interactions and behaviours within the preschool component of the *"PACE Family Program Handbook"*, please see section 3 (page 10) of the handbook for this program. The complete policy, *"Behavioural Guidance & Containment"* is also available for you to review. Please talk to staff with ideas and strategies used with your child as well as if you have any questions or concerns.

We will let you know if your child has had moments where they have been aggressive or very upset and have been in need of staff containment and support on the same day of occurrence, where possible. We will also let you know on the same day (or your emergency contact person) if your child has been involved in any interaction with another child where injury has occurred.

e) **SMOKING**



As with all public facilities where children are present, smoking is not permitted inside the building, on the PACE bus / staff vehicles or outside where the children are. Should you feel the need to smoke, a bench and ashtrays are available, under cover, in the front of the building. We ask that you plan your smoke breaks with the PACE team, in a way that allows you to have your break and also meet you and your child's need of time together here at PACE. We also ask that if staff are coming to visit you at your home, please smoke prior to them arriving.

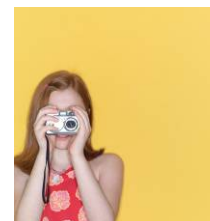
f) **DRUGS / MEDICATION**

If you have take prescribed medications, we ask that you try to take them prior to arriving at PACE. If you need to take any while you are here, please ensure the safety and containment of your medications at all times. No illicit or "street" drugs are allowed at PACE at any time. Staff are not permitted to provide parents with any medication nor are they allowed to administer any medication to children.

g) **WEAPONS** - No weapons of any kind are allowed at any time in the building, in staff vehicles or on the PACE bus.

h) **PHOTOS / VIDEOTAPING**

We obtain consent from parents / guardians to take photos for children's memory albums, document educational moments and videotape for supervision and training. However we do not have consent for others to take photos/videotape of children (whether using a camera or cellular phone). **To ensure the children's privacy, you are not permitted to take photos/videotaping of any child at PACE other than your own.**



i) **PHONES**



You are welcome, if needed, to use the PACE cordless phone. Please ask any staff member to make it available to you. As this phone line is also a fax line and used for PACE purposes, we ask that you keep your calls local and as brief as possible.

j) **CELLULAR PHONES**



To ensure that you are able to give your child the attention both you and they would like, we ask that you turn off you cell phone while with the children, or when meeting with staff. Should you need to receive or make an urgent call, please do so in a separate space to the children.

**We appreciate your understanding of these policies.
Our time together is valuable and we thank you in advance
for your consideration and attention.**

6. OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES:

- ✓ **Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)** <http://www.gov.bc.ca/mcf>

For Child Protection Emergencies:

- Anywhere in B.C. **1-800-663-9122**
- **Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS)** www.vacfss.ca
 - Phone: **778-331-4500** (after 4:30 pm & weekends, call MCFD after hours 604-660-4927)
 - Main office # 604-872-6723 Fax # 604-872-5274
- ✓ **Vancouver Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program**
www.scdp.bc.ca/ASCD%20Pages/mysite/index.htm (604) 254-1001
- ✓ **Vancouver Supported Child Development Program - Center for Ability**
www.centreforability.bc.ca (604) 451-5511
- ✓ **Richmond Supported Child Development Program** – Richmond Society for Community Living
www.rscl.org/What_We_Do/SCDP.htm (604) 279-7040
- ✓ **Office of Ombudsman in BC:** 1-800-567-3247 (www.ombudsman.bc.ca)
- ✓ **Representative for Children & Youth, BC:** 1-800-476-3933 (www.rcybc.ca).
- ✓ **Poison Control Centre:** 1-800-567-8911
- ✓ **Alcohol & Drug Information- Referral Service:** 1-800-663-1441



7. STAFF

Some of the teachers work in the Family Program as well as in the Outreach Support Services, so they are not always in the preschool or on site every day. Also the child therapists are not always on-site each day but each have some flexibility so they can find times to connect that work for you.

YOUR PACE SUPPORT TEAM INCLUDES:

- Service Coordinator: _____
- Child's Therapist: _____

Please know that we are always interested in hearing your input and discovering ways we can work together to provide a service that fits for you and your family.

If you have any questions or would like more information,
please contact us at The PACE Program:

Phone: (604) 266-3141

Fax: (604) 266-3041

Email: admin@thepaceprogram.ca

Or visit our website:
www.thepaceprogram.ca