



Our Kids Network key messages

Our Kids Network key messages are accompanied by supporting statements and key findings that should be used to tailor presentations and other communications to the situation and audience. Add other audience-specific information/data as needed.

Message 1: Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of individuals, organizations and agencies serving children and youth.

Message 2: OKN partners have a common agenda. We work together to promote and reinforce positive child and youth development.

Message 3: We identify and act on issues so communities, agencies and individuals can be in sync and effective in reaching the best possible solutions for children, youth and their families.

Message 4: OKN collects, analyzes and shares data across the community. We also help people interpret and use it effectively so individuals, organizations and communities can make well informed decisions about programs and services for children.

Message 5: OKN is committed to open, transparent and consistent communication with all our partners and participants.

Message 1: Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of individuals, organizations and agencies serving children and youth.

Speaking points:

- Our Kids Network (OKN) is the backbone organization for the Halton-wide partnership. Our partners provide dedicated resources to ensure that we steadily and consistently move forward towards our vision of “All children thrive!”
- Like a construction manager who attends to the whole building (while carpenters, plumbers and electricians contribute their parts), OKN core staff and leadership committees keep the collaborative process moving along while committees and working groups change and evolve.
- As the backbone of OKN, our job is to:
 - Guide our vision and strategy so we stay on target to meet our goals
 - Keep an eye on the big picture in a way that helps committees, partners and partner agencies make decisions about planning and implementation
 - Share our research results and help people understand and use the data effectively
 - Build public will and advance policy through our network and strong relationships
 - Structure and manage funding to ensure that OKN support of agencies and organizations serving children and youth remains stable
- Our 8 leadership partners are:
 - Halton Children’s Aid Society
 - Regional Municipality of Halton
 - Halton Regional Police Service
 - Halton District School Board
 - Halton Catholic District School Board
 - ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids
 - Halton Multicultural Council
 - ErinoakKids, Centre for Treatment and Development
- Collaboration is everything. More than 200 individuals from agencies and organizations in the early learning and care field; library systems; child, youth and family services; faith-based organizations; and the public, education, mental health and children’s services sectors are connected through OKN.

Message 2: OKN partners have a common agenda. We work together to promote and reinforce positive child and youth development.

Speaking points:

- Our vision is “All children thrive!”
- Our mission is to promote healthy development, security and safety of all children, youth and families through collective action.
- Through research, OKN has identified seven conditions of well-being needed for children, families, and the community as a whole to thrive. We call these conditions the “Halton 7” and we believe the entire community, including government and business, shares responsibility for achieving the conditions of well-being for children and families.
- The Halton 7 are:
 1. Children are healthy
 2. Children are learning
 3. Children are positively connected
 4. Children are safe
 5. Families are strong and stable
 6. Schools are connected to the community
 7. Neighbourhoods are where we live, work and play
- OKN partners and the community set the common agenda. As a backbone organization, we help by:
 - Identifying and defining the challenge(s) to be addressed
 - Building a common understanding of the problem(s)
 - Acknowledging that a collective impact¹ approach is required
 - Establishing clear and shared goal(s) for change
 - Identifying principles that guide our joint work

1. Collective Impact is a framework for collaborative roundtables focused on impacting complex community challenges

Message 3: We identify and act on issues so communities, agencies and individuals can be in sync and effective in reaching the best possible solutions for children, youth and their families.

Speaking points:

- OKN partners and participants have agreed that we will work together to achieve the Halton 7.
- While agencies' and organizations' activities are specific to their local communities and neighbourhoods, OKN helps coordinate a mutually reinforcing action plan.
 - For example, many Halton agencies use Developmental Assets® (DAs)² in their work with children and youth. The OKN Developmental Assets Table has a Halton-wide strategy and plan that reinforces the DA work of the agencies.
- Sometimes we team up with leadership partners or participating agencies on initiatives to meet objectives.
- We enable the community to support children and youth in many ways including:
 - Using data to identify and act on problems
 - Service coordination
 - Positive child and youth development
- Some examples of how we work together to improve life and solve problems

Why do more families in Halton Hills (compared to Halton overall) report feeling connected to their community?

When families do feel connected and part of a vibrant, healthy community, they are more likely to model caring positive behavior and feel that they can contribute something worthwhile to their community. We call this “social cohesion.”

In the *Our Kids Network Report Card 2011*, we see that only 18% of Halton families feel connected to their community, a 4% decrease since 2008. Only 18% of families in Halton say they identify with their community or have a sense of belonging.

Halton Hills is the one community in our service area that has reported an overall 6% increase in “social cohesion” since 2008.

So what's been happening in Halton Hills since 2008?

We know that the Acton Hub has established programs that respond directly to needs of families and children. The Hub Team of enthusiastic and committed partners works together on community activities that are very specific to community needs. Alison Hilborn, the Hub coordinator, tells us that people are going out of their way to make sure that parents and other family members, local businesses, faith and cultural centres and schools are included in planning and participation.

Woodview puts research into action

Woodview, an OKN participating agency that supports children and families with mental health difficulties, is using the Research Based Accountability (RBA) model which begins with the end result in mind and works backwards. Programs in Halton, Hamilton and Brantford, including those focused on both mental health and autism, use RBA to determine the key outcomes that each team will focus on. In their initial planning, teams thought about the Halton 7, the Woodview mission statement, and Ministry of Children and Youth Services mandates.

They've used measures such as Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths, Child and Adolescent Function Scale (CAFAS), Halton Youth Survey, Halton Youth Parent Survey, Child Development Institute (CDI, etc. to collect data and then evaluate progress at the end of each year. Teams look at successes and use the "Turn the Curve" method to make quality improvements for the coming year.

Data analysis for each program is presented to the Woodview Board Quality Assurance Committee, where next steps are discussed.

The *OKN Data Portal* and the *Report Card 2011* have information and examples of how agencies can use Results Based Accountability to frame their planning and work, just as Woodview has.

- **Service coordination**

Service coordination enables families to find and access the best supports to maintain a quality of life consistent with their values, priorities and preferences. Through service coordination, circles of support are created around each child, youth and family, ensuring access to effective, formal, integrated services and natural supports.

To support these efforts, the OKN Service Coordination Steering and Training Committee has developed Service Coordination Guidelines.

- **Positive child and youth development**

Our Kids Network has adopted a framework known as Developmental Assets². Developed in 1990 by the Search Institute®, Developmental Assets have become the benchmark for raising healthy children and youth. These assets represent the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to avoid risks and to thrive.

OKN is actively engaged in raising awareness and sharing knowledge of Developmental Assets with our partners and the community.

- **DA stories:**

[Police officer acts quickly](#) and helps young man build assets for the future

[Relationships are the key](#) to success for young man at risk

[The power of one](#) – making a difference in the life of a child

2. Created by the Search Institute® in 1990, Developmental Assets are the positive experiences and personal qualities that children and youth need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. The more assets a person has, the more likely they are to do better in school, make friends, and make healthier decisions.

Message 4: OKN collects, analyzes and shares data across the community. We also help people interpret and use it effectively so individuals, organizations and communities can make well informed decisions about programs and services for children.

Speaking points:

- We want to make important data and information open, accessible and usable so everyone can work towards our vision of all children thrive.
- The OKN Data Portal is an interactive database containing a large inventory of community-level data. Users will find community and neighbourhood-level information, demographics, OKN research data on health, safety, education, Developmental Assets, census data and more.
- The OKN Data Portal is a leading-edge tool that puts timely data at your fingertips and is a powerful resource for planning.
- By using the Data Portal, service providers have become more “data literate”. They have learned to understand and interpret data. They can create maps and charts using Halton data and their own to communicate more effectively. Using data from the portal, they can tell compelling and meaningful stories about the work we do.
- Key features of the Data Portal
 - Explore data using maps, spreadsheets or chart formats.
 - Download data for your own use.
 - Customize the appearance of the maps to suit your own needs.
 - Add your program data, create maps and then overlay OKN data with yours.
- **Data Portal stories**

ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids used information in the Data Portal to help their team make decisions about program delivery and location.

Significant research goes into program expansion at ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids. The OKN Data Portal makes that process much easier by ensuring that ROCK has community level data to draw upon. Recently, when creating a proposal to expand ROCK’s “Our Community Cares” program into Oakville, the agency used the Data Portal to map out demographic information, levels of support and community engagement by neighbourhood. The results were contrary to many preconceived ideas about Oakville communities, and helped to guide the agency to a specific area within the town that could best use support. The OKN Data Portal saved time and the hard data strongly supported an application for funding .

[Link to video](#)

The Milton Parks and Rec team used the Data Portal to better reach their target audience

In 2012, the Town of Milton Parks and Recreation Department began offering an after-school program. One part of the evaluation process was to see if the participants were coming from the areas of the community that the Department initially wanted to target. By adding Town of Milton data and using the OKN Data Portal mapping function, they identified that the after-school program was not reaching young people in some of the target neighbourhoods and population. Using the information from the OKN Data Portal report, Town of Milton staff decided to prepare a mailing to areas of the Town identified in the report. The mailing had a positive response –registration in the after-school program increased among the target population. Parks and Recreation staff believe that this result would have been difficult to reach without the use of the OKN Data Portal.

[Link to video](#)

Message 5: OKN is committed to open, transparent and consistent communication with all our partners and participants.

- Like the manager on the construction site, we know that open and consistent communication is absolutely necessary to keep the collaborative process moving along, *especially* because our committees and working groups change and evolve as we progress.
- We have formal and informal ways of keeping people informed. Formal ways include our website; an annual meeting day for sharing and networking; social media; and regular, structured meetings. We also seek opportunities to create more informal, yet productive, relationships between agencies and individuals.
- When we say open communication, we are committed to inclusiveness and a diversity of styles and methods. Difficult issues are raised, discussed and addressed.

Acknowledgement:

Special thanks to Liz Weaver, Vice-President of the Tamarack Institute and lead for Vibrant Communities Canada-Cities Reducing Poverty, for sharing her Collective Impact presentation

About key messages

Key messages are what you want the audience to remember after they've heard your speech, read your summary report, or visited your website. They are conversation and discussion starters that succinctly communicate what the target audience needs to know to understand and/or support the purposes of Our Kids Network. These key messages have been prepared to assist everyone who communicates about OKN.

Purposes of Our Kids Network

- Our vision is "All children thrive!"
- Our mission is to promote healthy development, security and safety of all children, youth and families through neighbourhood collaboration, service integration and measuring results.
- Strategic directions
 - Ensuring sustainable resources
 - Conducting applied research
 - Maximizing neighbourhood access to programs and services
 - Building capacity to meet changing demographics
 - Education, awareness and advocacy

Target Audiences

Internal

- Committees
- OKN Protocol Partners
 - Halton Children's Aid Society
 - Halton Region Health and Children's Services
 - Halton District School Board
 - Halton Catholic District School Board
 - Halton Police Service; ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids
 - ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development
 - Halton Multicultural Council
 - ROCK Reach Out Centre for Kids
- 90 agencies and organizations in the early learning and care field; library systems; child, youth and family services; faith-based organizations
- Champions
- Staff
- Hubs and teams

External

- Halton frontline service providers
- Policy people: elected officials, staff, program supervisors
- Agencies not currently involved with OKN.
- Other communities
- Media