

# From Babies to Boardrooms...

## CAPC and CPNP Are Involved!

Across the Atlantic Region, the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) projects, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, have just completed an extensive evaluation of their programs and activities from 2003 to 2005.

In preparation for this evaluation, the projects used a participatory process to define the core elements of CAPC and CPNP. The projects then examined how these core elements impacted on four different levels: the individuals who participated; the projects themselves; the communities in which these projects are located; and the broader system, including governments and universities.



**From Babies to Boardrooms** looks at one part of the regional evaluation – the study of how the core elements provided the foundation for contributions to change at the system level: what happened, who was involved, and the results. This document provides a brief overview.

### Results show that CAPC and CPNP are:

- ✓ key players in the delivery of child and family programs
- ✓ firmly established and well integrated in the broader network of policy, program and research initiatives for children and their families
- ✓ helping to create supportive environments for individuals, projects, communities, and the system through opportunities to share perspectives, expertise, and resources
- ✓ contributing to policy, practice, and research development at the system level because the core elements of the programs create conditions that contribute to system-level change
- ✓ building community capacity across Atlantic Canada – capacity that affects the public health of the community
- ✓ providing the system with a means to work toward improved public health for Atlantic Canadians.



## Core Elements

Key stakeholders from across the Atlantic provinces worked together to define and describe the **core elements** of CAPC and CPNP. They all agreed that CAPC and CPNP work because they focus on:

### Supportive Environments

– evident when there are places where people feel valued, respected and safe, and which can contribute to learning, empowerment, and mutual benefit.

### Participation and Involvement

– evident when people develop or enhance their confidence to participate, become involved, and contribute in whatever ways are comfortable and of mutual benefit.

### Capacity Building

– evident when people's capacities for learning, mutual support, and action can be further developed and enhanced. When people develop and enhance their capacities, they can feel empowered to take action as individuals. This, in turn, can set the stage for people with common interests to take action within communities and the system.

## This study of system-level involvement

uses evidence from project evaluation reports as well as key informant interviews with stakeholders from the federal government, the provincial government, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions.



Many types of activities were outlined that describe CAPC and CPNP's involvement with the broader system. These included:

- ✓ working with staff from federal, provincial, and municipal governments; regional health units; and school boards to plan and deliver programs in coordinated ways
- ✓ participating on provincial and national advisory committees for practice, policy, and research strategies
- ✓ promoting a way of working with families that recognizes and builds on their strengths
- ✓ promoting the opinions and perspectives of parents
- ✓ sharing training resources and opportunities for professional development
- ✓ providing work placements for post-secondary students in early childhood education and nursing
- ✓ promoting more sensitive approaches to program evaluation
- ✓ participating in collaborative research efforts on topics of importance to children and families, such as literacy and food security
- ✓ helping to disseminate research findings about children, families, and communities
- ✓ advocating for policies, programs, and research that better meet the needs of families.

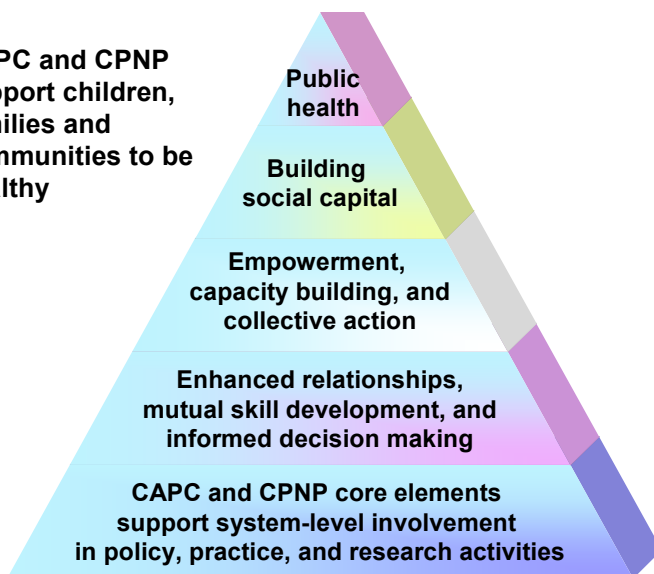
# Everybody benefits!

Individuals, projects, communities, and the system itself have all gained from system-level involvement. Mutual benefits include:

- ✓ enhanced relationships
- ✓ increased respect and credibility for everyone
- ✓ greater understanding of one another's perspectives
- ✓ better use of resources
- ✓ better skills in facilitation, building consensus, and research and evaluation
- ✓ more informed decision making for policy, program and research development
- ✓ greater sense of empowerment for those involved to take on new challenges, work for change, and be active citizens in their communities.



CAPC and CPNP support children, families and communities to be healthy



Flanagan, 2005

## And there's **more good news!**

CAPC and CPNP are providing a way to support public health goals in Atlantic Canada. When people interact and build relationships with other families, workplaces, neighbourhoods, local associations, and in a range of informal and formal meeting places – and do so with trust, cooperation, and a sense of shared values – they are building social capital.

Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. It's the "glue" that holds society together. And there's a lot of public health research to indicate that social capital has a positive effect on how people resist disease, cope with change, feel supported, and work together with a shared sense of civic responsibility.



# Voices from Atlantic Canada



*“There will never be enough milk, for instance, to give to all the pregnant women who lack the resources to purchase milk and grow a healthy baby. With this in mind, [we] know there are bigger questions to consider, like ‘Why does Mom not have these necessary resources?’ Because the organization dares to ask itself those bigger questions, it recognizes its responsibility for working within the system to effect change.”*

– NS CAPC/CPNP project

*“[We] took part in the accreditation process for the Kings Health Region, the Best Start Provincial Advisory Committee, a focus group for Child and Family Support services, and a consultation process that focussed on making changes to legislation in regard to provincial child welfare legislation, and the Director co-chairs the provincial Healthy Child Development Strategy.”* – PEI CAPC/CPNP project

*“As a result of working with [CAPC and CPNP projects] a review of organizational policies resulted in policy change in breastfeeding to make sure that the policies are up-to-date and support women in the Healthy Baby Club.”* – System partner, Newfoundland and Labrador

**“When people develop and enhance their capacities, they can feel empowered to take action as individuals. This, in turn, can set the stage for people with common interests to take action within communities and the system.”** – Valuing Our Work (2003), Public Health Agency of Canada, Atlantic Region

*“It fits so well with our programs (School of Nursing) ...what they are doing with families captures the essence of primary health care practice.”* – PEI community partner

*“The centre worked with HRD-NB and other partners on the policy surrounding the ‘household unit’ method of determining the level of assistance allocated to people living on income assistance. The representatives were open to discussions about how this impacts negatively on low-income families. A challenge at the system level is not the individuals but the levels of red tape.”* – NB CAPC/CPNP project



**“The ‘system’ is changing, one person at a time.”** – Key informant

For more information on the Atlantic CAPC and CPNP study of system-level involvement, see *From Babies to Boardrooms...CAPC and CPNP Are Involved! Building Social Capital in the Atlantic Region: CAPC and CPNP Contributions to Public Health – A Study of System-Level Involvement* (2005), available from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Atlantic Regional Office ([atlantic.phac.gc.ca](http://atlantic.phac.gc.ca)). Aussi disponible en français ([atlantique.aspc.gc.ca](http://atlantique.aspc.gc.ca)).