

# Family life education

## EDMONTON WELFARE COUNCIL

### YOUTH SERVICES DIVISION

#### REPORT OF THE FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

##### BACKGROUND

The Family Life Education Committee was established partly as a result of a report submitted to Youth Services by its Day Care Committee (January 1963). This report indicated, amongst other things, the need for a public education program which would stress the emotional needs of children during the first five or six years of life. The Youth Services Executive Committee initially felt this recommendation implied the bringing about of a great awareness on the part of youth - as present babysitters and future parents - of the make-up and development of human beings, particularly in the early stages of life. In our efforts to include such a learning experience in the formal school curriculum, it was pointed out it would be difficult to add any course of this nature to the present curriculum; and, secondly, some elements of such subject matter were already included in the high school course entitled "Health and Personal Hygiene."

It is interesting to note that in the recently released report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on Education recommended:

- "There should be a thorough examination of the educational programs offered to prepare girls and women of all ages, educational levels, and cultural and economic backgrounds to fulfill their responsibilities for homemaking, health and family life."
- "Early in the deliberations of the Committee concern was expressed about the inadequate preparation received by girls in all socio-economic groups for their role in the home. The necessity of giving the home-making role the dignity, status and importance it deserves--for all groups--was recognized. As a result of the Committee's study of existing educational programs in the field of homemaking, health and family life, the

Commission on the Status of Women included in its report a recommendation that these programs be thoroughly examined and widespread support be given to experimental approaches concerned with content, teaching methods, and timing of the education."

- "The contribution of the school adds greatly to the social, emotional and intellectual development of the child, even when the home offer a rich heritage. In families with little to offer, the children must rely almost exclusively on what they learn in schools and other outside agencies."

In subsequent discussions, the Youth Services Executive found other areas of concern:

- the presence of children at adult films
- the rising rate of juvenile delinquency
- mothers going to work without making adequate provisions for their children
- school drop-outs
- and the trend towards teen-age marriages and early parenthood

... all pointing among other things, to the need for better informed parents. The growing case loads in the social welfare agencies indicate the need for further strengthening of preventative measures in the area of family life.

The Youth Services Executive concluded there would be value in considering the formation of a citizens' group concerned with parent education and avenues of developing and promoting this resource as a means to strengthening family life.

### COMMITTEE PERSONNEL

In June of 1963 the Family Life Education Committee was formed. Mrs. J.W.D. Buchanan, a member of the Youth Services Executive Committee, was appointed as Chairman. The following people accepted invitations to join the Committee: Mr. R.J. Boutillier, Mrs. J.C. Cavanagh, Mr. R. Henbest, Mrs. F.A. Herbert, Mrs. C.R. Loder, Miss E. Logan, Miss E. McKerlie, Mrs. D.R.B. McArthur, Rev. D.S. Pratt, and Mrs. Thelma Scambler.

### FRAME OF REFERENCE

The Committee developed a frame of reference at a meeting in September 1963:

"That further exploration be made with representatives of appropriate organizations to determine the need for and the best methods of implementing a program of family life education in the community."

The work of the Committee to be undertaken as follows:

1. To explore literature and programs from other cities where Family Life projects have been undertaken.
2. To contact groups and organizations in Edmonton who have an interest and concern in this area.
3. To prepare a report for the Youth Services Division.

### REPORT

#### Definition of Term

At the onset the committee clarified what is meant by the term "Family Life Education" with the emphasis being in the preventative field. Families with serious problems would require counselling, service. The aim of a Family Life Education program is to strengthen and build up strong healthy family relationships, particularly parent-child relationships in order to prevent and lessen the high incidence of broken and unhappy homes, juvenile delinquency and mental breakdowns.

Such a program endeavours to achieve these aims by preparing young couples for marriage and helping parents understand the normal developmental growth of children. To assist them in visualizing this growth against their own individual family

background and to realize that the family is a unit with dynamic interactions, each having its own unique pattern.

In addition, such programs would assist parents in becoming aware and familiar with the resources available in the community that contribute towards the well being of the family unit.

#### Resource Material

During the past two months the committee has met with a number of individuals and representatives of agencies and organizations (see Appendix) who are interested in and concerned about family life education in the City of Edmonton. The Committee members have become informed about the Family Life Education projects in other communities through reports, journals, pamphlets, and correspondence with individuals related to these projects.

Montreal - The Family Life Education Council of Montreal Inc. has found that the most effective way to strengthen and build strong and healthy family relationships seems to be through small discussion groups where parents meet for eight to ten consecutive weeks with a staff member of the Council acting as the discussion leader in the group. The Council conducts a training program which develops the discussion leaders necessary to carry out its program. The program is used by existing organizations in the community such as Home and School Association, Men's and Women's Service Clubs, Youth Groups, Recreation Organizations, groups affiliated with religious institutions, professional groups and nursery or other schools.

The Family Life Education Council of Montreal Inc. makes a concerted effort to reach the public through mass media. It uses radio, T.V., and the press. The Council also has an excellent library and a film library.

Philadelphia - The Family Services of Philadelphia has developed its Family Life Education program in cooperation with the public library, with the branch libraries offering their facilities to discussion groups on Family Life Education.

Toronto - The Parent Education Associates in Toronto provide assistance in planning programs, including speakers, discussion leaders and literature for sale.

Sydney, N.S. - The Family Life Bureau works towards strengthening family life. It is an agency distinct from the Catholic Charities and Family Welfare Agency. The Diocesan Charities and Welfare Agency provide counselling services to problem families and the Family Life Bureau works to prevent such problems arising.

Mabou, N.S. - "The Family Life Education Program, the only one of its kind in English speaking Canada, was introduced into the educational system of the Province of Nova Scotia with the approval of the Department of Education on an experimental basis in 1957.

"It was begun in an attempt to meet the needs of the large number of students who were becoming drop-outs because they were uninterested in or unable to follow the purely academic or college preparatory course. It has proved highly successful and brought new life, interest and ambition to those who have and are following it." ... "The aim of the program is to provide a means of developing more balanced and mature individuals."... "All academic subjects are taught - however, new techniques, new texts and new methods of approach are used. Every subject is analyzed in the light of its possibilities for the rebuilding of a strong social and family life. The result is a program which has broken away from emphasis on subject matter as such and has made all subjects contribute to the ideals of citizenship in the home and in the community."

Cleveland, Ohio - The Family Health Association of Cleveland has as its aim "to provide knowledge and attitudes that will strengthen the standards of home life in the Greater Cleveland area and enable people of all ages to live more constructively." To this end, activity is carried on with school programs and community groups. As well, Cleveland has developed one "thirty-nine session telecourse" on Family Life which is carried by a local television station.

#### Community Interviews

Through the committee's activity in interviewing and corresponding with various agencies and organizations in the city, a definite interest in and need for Family Life Education has been indicated. These views cover a variety of concerns and

interest, each expression related to the particular purposes of the individual organization's programs.

Particular needs were indicated in the areas of:

- preparation for marriage and parenthood
- teen-age parents
- foster home parents
- parents without partners
- sex education
- child growth and development
- family budgetting
- promoting healthy family relationship.

The committee were informed by the Y.W.C.A. that whereas their Mothers' Day-Out program was geared to meet the mother in the 22 - 35 years age grouping, they were concerned about the number of teen-age mothers who seemed to have special needs.

Individual Home and School groups have wanted to develop programs of parent education but have found it difficult to locate the leadership required.

The Family Service Bureau expressed a concern in this area but did not have funds to provide for more than their present "Preparation For Marriage" series.

The Canadian Mental Health Association provides films and speakers as part of their public education to build better "mental health" into the family life of our community.

The churches have a special concern about providing courses in preparation for marriage and would like to add more emphasis to this area as well as call upon resource people for family life education programs.

The Special Services Section of the Edmonton Public School Board saw particular need for emphasis on education re the early development of children in particular the emotional development of children, 0 - 5 years of age.

Similar concerns for the whole field of family life education were expressed by the other organizations and groups.

The committee feel that one of the major problems to be met in any attempt to develop a Family Life Education program in Edmonton will be that of obtaining skilled discussion leaders.

One of the concerns expressed indicated that families most in need of this type of assistance would not likely avail themselves of discussion group programs. In order to meet their needs, effective use of mass media must be developed - T.V., radio (see report of Montreal Family Life Council.)

RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of information collected, the members of the Family Life Education Committee are convinced that there is a need for a Family Life Education program in Edmonton. To provide a sound basis for such a program, we recommend:

1. That the Edmonton Welfare Council assisted by the Extension Department of the University sponsor an introductory seminar on Family Life Education, as a means of interpreting to all interested citizens, community organizations, and agencies the purposes and functions of such a program.

2. That development of Family Life Education should take place under the direction of a coordinating body working through existing community services, for example family counselling services, religious bodies, community recreational and educational organizations.

December 6, 1963

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APPENDIX

Agencies and Organizations Interviewed by Committee Members

Canadian Mental Health Association - Edmonton Branch  
Catholic Family and Child Service  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Department of Extension, University of Alberta  
Edmonton Home and School Council  
Edmonton Public School Board - Special Services Division  
  - Night School Program  
Edmonton Separate School Board - Special Services Division  
Family Service Bureau  
Jewish Family Services  
- Provincial Guidance Clinic - Department of Public Health  
Y.M.C.A. - Program Department  
Y.W.C.A. - Program Department

Organizations Approached by letter

Lutheran Church - Welfare Committee  
Edmonton and District Labour Council  
United Church Women  
Junior League of Edmonton  
Local Council of Women  
National Council of Jewish Women  
Study Group on Welfare Problems  
Edmonton Council of Churches  
Mormon Church

Further Correspondence received from:

Canadian Welfare Council - Consultant for Family Services  
  Miss Lillian Thomson  
Family Life Education Council of Montreal Inc.  
Family Life Bureau - Nazareth House, Sydney, Nova Scotia  
St. Joseph's High School, Mabou, Nova Scotia  
Parent Education Associates - Toronto