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**Summary Report**  
**SR-CA-nns3-00**

**Canada**

***The path to school: 0-5 years in Nova Scotia northern region***

## **Northern Nova Scotia: The Path to School: 0-5 Years**

Public Health Services provides a range of health education and support services to families during the prenatal and early infancy periods. Following this period, few services are provided until the child reaches four and a half to five years old when public health nurses screen their vision at primary registration.

Family Resource Centres and social services do provide programmes and support for this age group and their parents. In Northern Nova Scotia, however, these services are perceived to be under-funded, with limited coverage and their benefits unrecognised.

The importance of having programmes and support for the developmental years from zero to five years is undeniable. Yet evidence needs to be in place in Northern Nova Scotia linking the impact of services for children in this age group to such critical skills as independence, some language and communication ability, and social skills. Such evidence along with cost and coverage information can assist in reducing gaps in services and strengthen existing services.

**Evidence:** From March to June 1999, field work teams visited schools in Northern Nova Scotia at grade primary registration to conduct interviews with a total of 1353 parents. At the end of the interviews parents were asked to give written permission for their child to participate in an assessment to be completed by the grade primary teacher. This assessment will assist in determining the impact of early childhood services. For those parents that provided permission, assessments were completed by teachers during the first two weeks of October 1999. In December 1999 a brief institutional review will be conducted by telephone. Information will be collected on the preschools, play schools, day cares and play groups in which the children in the study were enrolled before they entered grade primary.

**Planning and action to date (late 1999):** The form for assessing the children was developed through focus groups with grade primary teachers from each of the four counties in the Region. This process produced an instrument which some teachers have suggested should be a standard reporting tool for grade primary children. It also presented an opportunity for teachers to come together and discuss their concerns in the area of childhood development.

Analysis has just begun and some preliminary findings will be available by February 2000.

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