



Bright Beginnings

**SUPPORTING
ENGLISH-SPEAKING
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

**in the Gaspé
and Magdalen Islands**

MARCH 2019

Acknowledgements

This document was produced by the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) in collaboration with the Council for Anglophone Magdalen Islanders (CAMI), Vision Gaspé-Percé Now (VGPN), the Eastern Shores School Board (ESSB), the Anchor Adult Education Centre, and Family Ties New Carlisle.

It was made possible through financial contributions from Health Canada as part of the *Action Plan for Official Languages – 2018-2023: Investing in our future* and from the *Fonds d'appui au rayonnement des régions* of the ministère des Affaires municipales et de l'Habitation.

Information on pages 1 and 4–9 has been taken from the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN) Early Childhood Framework available at www.chssn.org.



WHAT IS Bright Beginnings?

Bright Beginnings is an adapted approach to supporting English-speaking children and families in the Gaspé and Magdalen Islands. It originated through a collaboration between CASA, CAMI and VGPN who began to work with regional and local partners to better adapt programs and services to support English-speaking children 0 to 5 years old and their families. This approach has been adopted by the CHSSN as a provincial framework for English-speaking communities.

ADDRESSING UNIQUE RISK FACTORS

Bright Beginnings is an approach that responds to specific risk factors often faced by English-speaking children and their families such as:

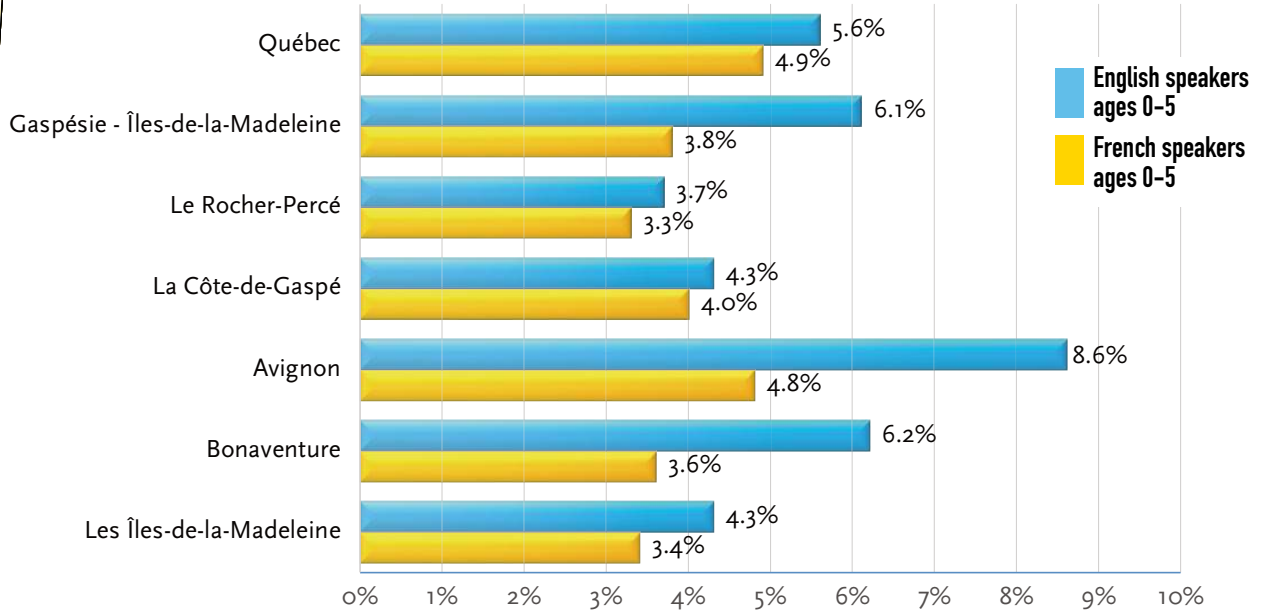
- lack of services available in English;
- increased isolation and mental health problems; and
- high percentage of parents living on low incomes (poverty).



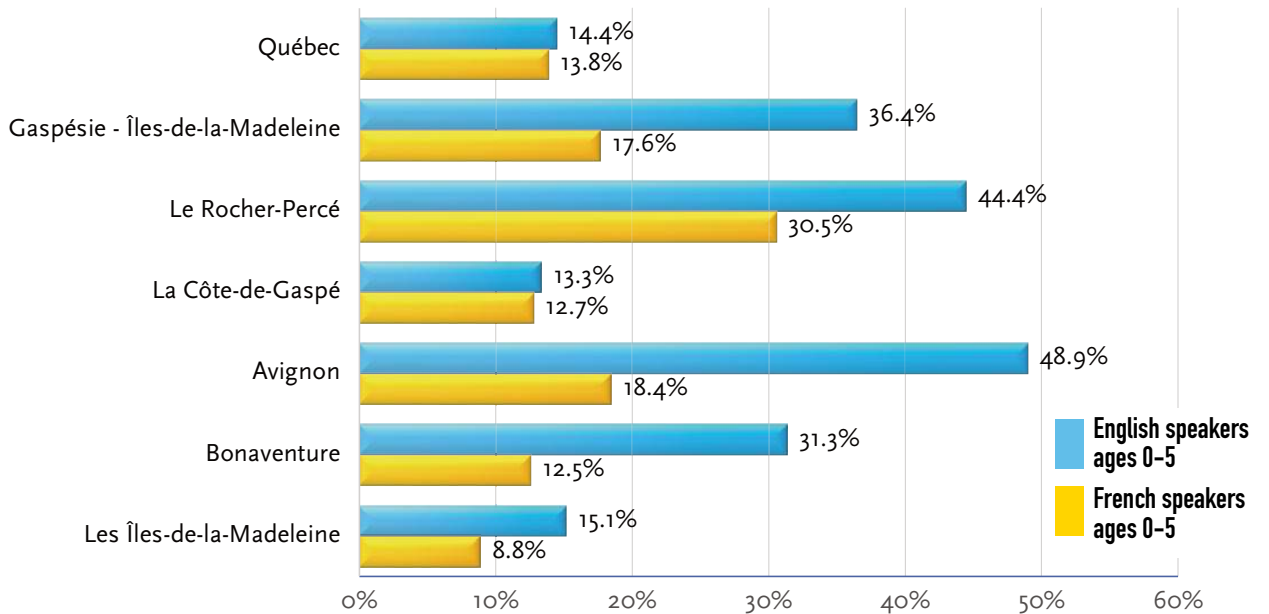
Gaspé-Magdalen Islands Bright Beginnings partners at a regional collaboration meeting held on January 23, 2019.



Proportion of children 0 to 5 in the English- and French-speaking populations



Proportion of children 0 to 5 in lone-parent families



Source: JPocock Research Consulting, based on data from the 2016 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada. Language concept is First Official Language Spoken with multiple responses.

Proportion
of kindergarten
children vulnerable in at
least one area of development

according to different sociodemographic
characteristics, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine,
2012 and 2017

	2012	2017
SEX		
Boys	30.0%	27.4%
Girls	19.8%	16.9%
AGE		
Younger than 5 years and 9 months	27.7%	31.2%
From 5 years and 9 months to 6 years old	29.7%	22.7%
From 6 years to 6 years and 3 months old	26.0%	17.2%*
Six years and 3 months and older	17.7%*	17.3%*
MOTHER TONGUE		
French (with or without other languages, except English)	22.9%	19.9%
English (with or without other languages, except French)	48.9%	50.7%*

Source: Enquête québécoise sur le développement des enfants à la maternelle 2017 : Portrait statistique pour le Québec et ses régions administratives, Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2018.

* Variation between 15% and 25%; interpret with caution.

INDIVIDUALS OF PARENTING AGE (AGES 25 TO 44)

- Have low education attainment (39%), substantially greater than Francophones of the same age (27.4%).
- Face an unemployment rate of 22.1%, which greatly exceeds the proportion of unemployed French speakers (10.5%).
- Have a greater tendency to live on an income of less than \$20,000 compared to French speakers (22.6% compared to 17.1%).
- Are less likely to have a university degree compared to French speakers (15.2% compared to 18.6%)

Source: JPocock Research Consulting, based on data from the 2016 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada. Language concept is First Official Language Spoken with multiple responses.

Important issues TO CONSIDER



ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN

A significant percentage of English-speaking children come from vulnerable socio-economic family environments. They are also faced with additional challenges of learning a second language and feeling a greater sense of isolation. Communication skills and social and emotional development could be, in many cases, priority protective factors to reinforce. Other important protective factors include motor skill development and the adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING FAMILIES

Due to language, cultural, and economic barriers, English-speaking families in low-income situations may experience additional social isolation and discrimination. They may also be unaware and even reluctant to participate in programs and services provided to them. Culturally and linguistically adapted outreach strategies that engage English-speaking parents and help them adopt positive parenting attitudes and practices is an important consideration.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES

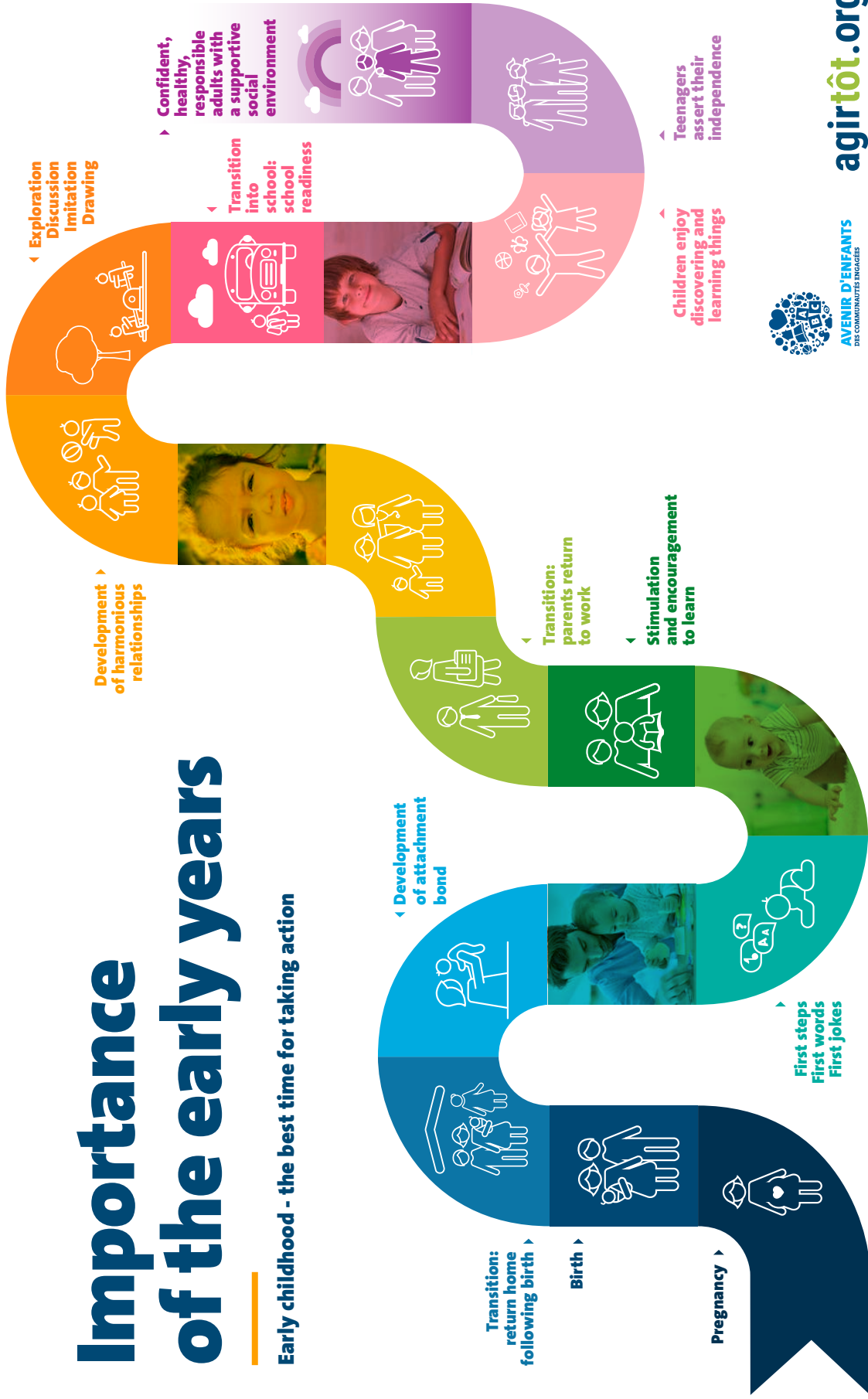
English-speaking communities lack accessible programs and services for children from birth to age five. These communities must be mobilized and proactive in supporting their service providers. Some examples include increasing the availability of child care services in English particularly for vulnerable families and ensuring English families can access child protection services in their language.

IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY YEARS

A comprehensive approach to supporting our little ones involves long-term planning right from pregnancy until early adulthood. These early life transitions as indicated in the following infographic are crucial in developing a solid foundation lasting a lifetime.

Importance of the early years

Early childhood - the best time for taking action



agirtôt.org

AVENIR D'ENFANTS
DES COMMUNAUTÉS ENGAGÉES

Promoting an ecosystemic approach

An ecosystemic approach promotes the development of strategies that reinforce protective factors that have a positive impact on the child, family and community. It encourages collaboration between partners and engages them in a joint planning process from pregnancy to early adulthood.



“Protective factors serve to shield children from difficulties. The more present they are in the life of a child, the better the child’s chances of developing their full potential, sustaining a positive educational experience, and fully assuming their parenting role as adults.”*

PROTECTIVE FACTORS BY SYSTEM**

CHILD	FAMILY	COMMUNITY
<p>ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS</p> <p>Ability to understand and express oneself through oral language</p> <p>Early reading and writing skills</p>	<p>SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL</p> <p>Family income</p> <p>Level of educational achievement</p>	<p>NEIGHBOURHOOD'S PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS</p> <p>Availability of safe green spaces</p> <p>Housing quality (hygiene and affordability)</p> <p>Social cohesion</p> <p>Social capital</p>
<p>COGNITIVE SKILLS</p> <p>Sustained attention ability/memory</p> <p>Early numeracy skills</p> <p>General knowledge</p>	<p>PARENTS' ATTITUDES</p> <p>Sense of being competent (self-esteem/confidence)</p> <p>Parents' aspirations with regard to their child's educational achievement</p> <p>Parents' association with reading and writing</p>	<p>ACCESSIBILITY AND QUALITY OF SERVICES</p> <p>Daycare services</p> <p>Health-care services</p> <p>Social services</p> <p>Community services</p> <p>Public transportation</p>
<p>SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS</p> <p>Peer relationships</p> <p>Sense of being competent/self-esteem</p>	<p>PARENTING PRACTICES</p> <p>Quality of emotional and cognitive parent-child interactions</p> <p>Exposure to a variety of educational experiences</p> <p>Parent-child reading habits (early start, frequency)</p>	<p>MOBILIZATION ON BEHALF OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION</p> <p>Collaboration between child, family, and intervention practitioners</p> <p>Intervention practitioners' beliefs</p> <p>The community's involvement (alliances/partnerships)</p>
<p>PHYSICAL SKILLS AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS</p> <p>Fine and gross motor skills</p> <p>Diet</p> <p>Sleep</p> <p>Physical activities</p>		

* Source: Taken from the Ecosystemic Partnership Approach guide – a handbook intended for local groups of partners by *Avenir d'enfants*.

** Source: Taken directly from www.agirtot.org

English-speaking
communities

Government &
service providers

COLLABORATION

Creating new and innovative
programs and services

Child



Family

Adapting existing services

Community

Outreach to vulnerable
children and families

VALUES

Preserving Identity

Social Inclusion

Equity

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS Framework



COLLABORATION BETWEEN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITIES, GOVERNMENTS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

The Bright Beginnings framework promotes collaboration between English-speaking communities, governments, and service providers. This collaboration fosters increased dialogue and understanding of the issues and challenges facing English-speaking children and families. It also promotes the development of a trusting relationship between the principal actors to facilitate positive change.

LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Once a strong base of collaboration is established, this framework encourages English-speaking communities to support government and service providers in adapting existing programs and services (linguistically and culturally) to better meet the needs of English-speaking children and families.

CREATION OF NEW AND INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In some cases, creating new and innovative programs and services designed to effectively meet the unique needs of English-speaking children and families may be a preferred or only option. Pilot projects can be an effective way to test and evaluate the effectiveness of a new approach!

OUTREACH TO VULNERABLE ENGLISH-SPEAKING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

English-speaking communities are well positioned to support government and service providers by reaching out to vulnerable English-speaking children and families and helping them connect with programs and services.

Values

English community organizations have three key values in common that will foster the greatest impact on the overall health and well-being of English-speaking children and families.

PRESERVING IDENTITY

Receiving essential child and family-based programs and services that are linguistically and culturally adapted not only enables participants to fully benefit from them, but also helps to preserve their identity (acceptance of who they are), which is critical to their overall mental health and well-being.

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Many English-speaking children and families feel socially excluded. This can be mitigated by creating greater understanding and acceptance of differences.

EQUITY

Minority communities must be active participants in supporting governments and service providers to ensure an equitable distribution of programs and services available to them.

Initiatives UNDERWAY

BREAKING ISOLATION AND CREATING NETWORKS

In collaboration with Baie-des-Chaleurs Active et en Santé and Avenir d'enfants, CASA and VGPN offer Wiggle, Rhyme & Storytime workshops throughout the Gaspé Coast. These parent-child workshops incorporate nursery rhymes, reading, crafts, and physical activities aimed at increasing children's motor and sensory skills. Parents gain the knowledge and confidence needed to create positive outcomes for their children.





BILINGUAL ACTIVITIES AND INTEGRATION

In collaboration with CASA, Maison de la Famille Avignon is working to offer bilingual activities for young children within the MRC of Avignon. The main objective is to help reduce language barriers by increasing children's exposure to and knowledge of both the English and French languages through various activities. Ultimately, this initiative strives to break isolation and increase language skills for both English- and French-speaking children and their parents.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

With support from Saines Habitudes de Vie, CASA hosts parent-child cooking workshops aimed at teaching families affordable and healthy recipes that can be easily made at home. This hands-on experience helps children to develop fine motor skills and essential skills such as reading and following directions. It also allows parents to increase social connections and to bond with their children through nutrition.

PARENTING SUPPORT

The Eastern Shores School Board is collaborating with community organizations and the CISSS to host events for parents of children in pre-k to grade two aimed at creating a relationship of trust with parents and promoting a positive perception of education. Fostering continuity between schools, CLCs, the CISSS, and community organizations, these events take place every month and pair fun activities with information sessions led by professionals.

BORN TO READ

This program promotes the importance of early literacy skills to families with young babies. For over 20 years, Family Ties has worked with CISSS personnel to provide new parents with quality English books and relevant information about local resources during immunization clinics at the CLSC Paspébiac. In 2018, Family Ties collaborated with CASA to broaden the reach of the program; it now includes families served by CLSC Gascons and CLSC Caplan.

GROCERY CART READER

Supported by multiple funders, CASA adapted a local author's book into a bilingual grocery cart reader and collaborated with a local business to have the reader available to their clients. This bilingual picture book attaches to the handle of grocery carts for little ones to flip through while grocery shopping with their parents. Picture books are an important part of learning how to read and encourage language development.



BRIGHT BEGINNINGS REGIONAL MEETING

This annual meeting brings together community organizations, government, and service providers to discuss priorities for 0 to 5-year-olds and their families. In 2019, participants focused on three main objectives: sharing experiences and knowledge, increasing understanding of the issues and challenges facing English-speaking children 0 to 5 and their families, and collaboratively setting the Bright Beginnings action plan for the next three years.



TRAVELLING LITERACY BAGS

CAMI, in collaboration with Grosse-Île High School and the Municipality of Grosse-Île, provides Literacy Bags to parents on a weekly basis. These bags provide English-speaking families with tools for positive parenting and childhood development around specific themes related to routines, healthy lifestyles, and early learning. Each themed bag contains books, information brochures, and activity sheets that promote parent-child learning and bonding.



MAKE THE MOST OF PLAY

Make the Most of Play focuses on everyday parent-child literacy in the home and aims to support and nurture literacy for 0 to 5-year-olds and their parents. Through an interactive book club called 'Play With Words' which uses videos on Facebook to suggest easy sensory activities, the project promotes early literacy as a playful and regular part of home life. The project, led by the Anchor Adult Education Centre, also reaches out to various partners that support English-speaking parents, such as the Gaspésie Literacy Council (GLC). The GLC provided training around developing a bank of volunteer tutors who can be paired with parents to provide support with their literacy skills.





MUNCHKIN MANSION HITS THE ROAD

Munchkin Mansion Playschool (MMP) is a parent-child program designed for children ages 1 to 5 years, delivered by Family Ties in New Carlisle. In partnership with The Anchor Adult Education Centre, a special parent-child grant has been approved by the Ministry of Education to start up a trial session of Munchkin Mansion at Shigawake Port-Daniel School. A typical day at MMP includes free play, storytime, arts and crafts, singing, a healthy snack, and outdoor play. The goal of the program is to stimulate learning, encourage healthy childhood development, and provide support to parents.



BABY AND ME

Baby and Me is offered by Family Ties with financial support from the Public Health Agency of Canada Community Action Program for Children. The program aims to support and strengthen existing parenting abilities and promote the development of new skills so parents feel confident in their role in raising healthy babies. Weekly sessions offer parents the opportunity to increase their social networks, share information, and enhance knowledge. Presentations by health professionals are organized in partnership with the CISSS and give parents access to specialist information. For many families, Baby and Me is an introduction to community programs and encourages parents to access other available services.



SCHOOL READINESS

Early evaluation and intervention are crucial in ensuring that children meet their developmental milestones and are ready to start school. Working with the CISSS, Vision Gaspé-Percé Now is translating and distributing a helpful guide for parents, *Découvrons ensemble des activités et jeux*. The guide will allow parents to monitor their child's development, watch for delays or difficulties, and ultimately, encourage them to approach the appropriate resources for assistance when needed.