

## Executive Summary

Let's Talk About Touching (LTAT) is a sexual abuse prevention program that is managed by the Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia under direction of a steering committee. The program is widely known and consistently praised throughout the province and elsewhere in Canada. In talking about LTAT, Early Childhood Educators who implement LTAT in their centres, LTAT trainers, host agency administrators and postsecondary faculty express passionate appreciation of the program.

Again and again, participants said, "LTAT is a great program." The workshop leaders providing LTAT training were seen as organized, knowledgeable and well informed professionals who were open to questions and provided a positive learning environment. All of the teachers who received LTAT training found that the training was valuable in their personal and professional lives. However, many did not initiate the program in their centres, either because of lack of time, lack of support, or other barriers.

A continuing problem for ECEBC has been the lack funds to establish the kind of infrastructure that adequately provides ongoing communication to its membership. Information updates, training opportunities, mentoring and networking, and professional development are vital to this profession. As respondents have indicated, a program like LTAT would benefit greatly from support systems, refresher courses, mentoring, and networking opportunities. And, for the program to be sustainable, succession planning needs to be considered to ensure the availability of trained, experienced facilitators.

ECE faculty at postsecondary institutions all stated that LTAT is very important or even essential curriculum for ECE graduates. There is no question that LTAT is viewed as an effective and vitally important part of the curriculum for those working in child care centres and kindergartens. It was suggested by some that there is a link between LTAT and the Taking Care manual. The possibility was raised that LTAT, combined with the Taking Care manual, might be offered through the postsecondary system at a Post-Basic level.

It was observed that there needs to be ways of adapting the LTAT Train the Trainer program to respond to the special circumstances of Northern communities and Aboriginal communities. Host agencies suggested that it is desirable to make the LTAT concepts available to a broader audience, in particular to the Family Day Care providers, and note that it is helpful to have all staff exposed to LTAT training in order to create a safe and knowledgeable culture.

Suggestions were made for expanding access through distance delivery, course modularization, travel subsidies, etc. It was suggested that connections be strengthened with the CCRR's to establish more effective networks and information-sharing, and that discussions take place with the ECE articulation committee to explore the possibility of including LTAT curriculum within postsecondary programs

It is clear that a significant challenge to the effective implementation of LTAT has been the instability of office staffing over the past few years. Prior to the current Administrator being hired in December, 2005, there had been a problem with staff turnover, and this key position had been vacant for over half a year. Although the office is now running smoothly, the instability in staffing created serious problems during the Phase 3 implementation of LTAT. Host agencies, trainers and teachers were frequently unable to access resources and information, and there were great delays in teachers receiving certificates on completion of their training. Staffing problems also resulted in problems with keeping the database current. Although this situation is now being resolved, it has presented some problems in conducting the evaluation, as the database does not contain complete, current records.

At present, there is only one staff member in the provincial office which serves over 700 members scattered throughout the province. Although she is ably managing the office functions and providing Board support, LTAT represents a very small component of her job responsibilities. Much of the administration of the LTAT program has been provided by the steering committee members, busy professionals who are also facilitators and trainers for the project and who serve as volunteers on the LTAT steering committee.

The Board of ECEBC has recently considered the possibility of hiring of an executive director to respond to the needs of members and assist in expanding public awareness of the field. With additional staffing, programs such as LTAT could be supported through an efficient database, website resources, highly developed communication systems, as well as mentoring and networking. This infrastructure development could help to ensure the sustainability of the LTAT Train the Trainer program. However, the tremendous demands that administration of ongoing curriculum places on an organization such as ECEBC must not be overlooked. If ECEBC's primary role is to offer member services, then it may be more appropriate for the postsecondary institutions to offer some components of the LTAT curriculum, with ECEBC providing follow-up support and refresher courses in keeping with their commitment to promote professional development and high standards of practice.

Within the ECE community, there is general agreement that LTAT is an effective sexual abuse prevention program that provides valued training which helps ECE teachers introduce children to some basic safety concepts upon which parents and teachers can build further information as children mature. It is the capacity of ECEBC to extend and expand ongoing support to the delivery of LTAT which needs consideration in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the program.

### **Recommendations**

At a half-day think tank session, a small group made up of LTAT facilitators, the ECEBC Board liaison to LTAT and the ECEBC Administrator reviewed the draft report and discussed the sustainability and long-term vision for LTAT. The group envisioned a time

when children in Canada and the ECE field and its practitioners will be valued locally and nationally, and when professionalism within the ECE field will be sufficient to support LTAT as a program which is regularly developed, updated and revised to meet evolving community needs. LTAT, like the CARE program, will become known and accepted by parents, and recognized and supported as a bridge into school programs. In such a vision, LTAT might be integrated as a part of the curriculum being offered by post-secondary institutions, and ECEBC would have sufficient staffing to support the program and offer ongoing professional development for LTAT. The following recommendations were made to be reviewed by the ECEBC Board of Directors:

1. Develop a solid infrastructure that will support broad access to LTAT training and implementation
  - a. Develop capacity within the ECEBC office to support and implement LTAT training
    - Ensure sufficient staffing to support LTAT program
    - Create a complete and accurate database of host agencies, facilitators, trainers and teachers.
    - Provide basic LTAT training for office staff to ensure familiarity with the program
    - Develop detailed flow chart outline roles and responsibilities at each stage of LTAT training.
    - Complete policies and procedures manual
    - Develop LTAT webpage for ECEBC website.
  - b. Strengthen and expand partnership at a provincial level between ECEBC and the CCRR network
    - Be present at a CCRR conference
    - Explore modifications that would include Family Day Care practitioners
    - Explore ways of CCRR's assisting with networking, mentoring and refresher courses.
    - Work with CCRR's to explore cultural barriers and ways of addressing them.
    - Work with CCRR's to develop ways of supporting LTAT in rural and remote communities.
  - c. Support and strengthen connection with the B.C. Aboriginal Child Care Services
    - Meet to review evaluation report
    - Discuss possible joint projects for revising curriculum.
  - d. Explore opportunities with more closely with training programs
    - Develop presentation for an articulation meeting.
    - Consider ways in which colleges can introduce LTAT in the curriculum, perhaps as a Post-Basic program.
    - Link with CCRR's for possible space and training activities.

2. Develop a promotion and marketing plan to create public awareness about the LTAT program and its successes.
  - a. Circulate evaluation results broadly
  - b. Propose LTAT/Taking Care session at Board retreat
  - c. Ensure researchers and potential partners are aware of LTAT developments
  - d. Develop news releases about LTAT achievements
  - e. Circulate questionnaires and information sheets at conference.
  - f. Encourage board members to take on a more active role in promoting LTAT in their own communities.
  
3. Develop a succession plan to recruit and mentor new LTAT facilitators and advocates.
  - a. Steering Committee to develop a list of potential facilitators
  - b. Steering Committee to brainstorm plan for recruitment and training.