

Novita has carried out a thorough review of the literature about the delivery of services to children who have a disability. The Life Needs [Model](#) of Service Delivery came from this review.

Where did the Life Needs Model come from?

Gillian King, Ph.D, Research Director at Thames Valley Children's Centre, with others, developed the Life Needs Model. She has published two articles that describe the model and how it has been put into practice at the Thames Valley Children's Centre.

View more information about the model on the Novita website at http://www.novita.org.au/Content.aspx?p=584#further_information

Thames Valley Children's Centre is a rehabilitation centre that provides services to children and young people with physical disabilities, developmental disabilities and/or communication needs, primarily in Southwestern Ontario, Canada.

The Centre provides services to more than 5,500 children, ranging from newborns to young adults every year and is one of the 19 children's rehabilitation centres that make up the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services (OACRS)

The question that Gillian and her team asked was:

"What services should be in place for a community or region to meet the complex needs of children and youth with disabilities?"

To answer this question, Gillian and her team looked closely at the experience of people with disability and what they want from services. They found that:

- people with disabilities have the same goals, needs and dreams as people without disabilities. All people want to have:
 - friends
 - opportunities to contribute, to play an active part in their communities
 - recognition for their contribution.
- families want services to:
 - be timely and responsive
 - be supportive and to respect their role as parents
 - have positive results for their children.
- moving from one stage in life to another can be difficult for both the child and the family
- children function best when they are well supported by their family and their community
- children are helped to develop resilience in safe environments that allow them try and sometimes fail

- people with disabilities view negative attitudes and beliefs of others as their greatest barrier.

Keeping the above information in mind, the team came up with answers to the following questions regarding services for children and young people with disability:

Question	Answer
WHO?	children and youth with disability
HOW?	through a family-centred approach
WHAT?	services delivered through programs
WHEN?	to cover key transitions
WHERE?	community based
WHY?	to support participation & quality of life

They also determined that services must:

- respect the natural worth, dignity and strength of individuals
- be based on people being treated equally
- aim for people becoming as independent as possible, well supported by their community.

They maintained that services should:

- focus on strengths, interests, hopes and dreams
- be provided in a family-centred manner
- focus on involvement at both the family and the community level.

The above beliefs were the driving force for the Life Needs Model. The Model was designed as an organisational tool to:

- develop a sound set of beliefs and practices in an organisation
- improve programs and services
- develop new programs and services
- work together with the community to develop positive and supportive attitudes
- assist and support the development of the best possible knowledge and skills in workers
- measure the effectiveness of services.

A closer look at the Life Needs Model

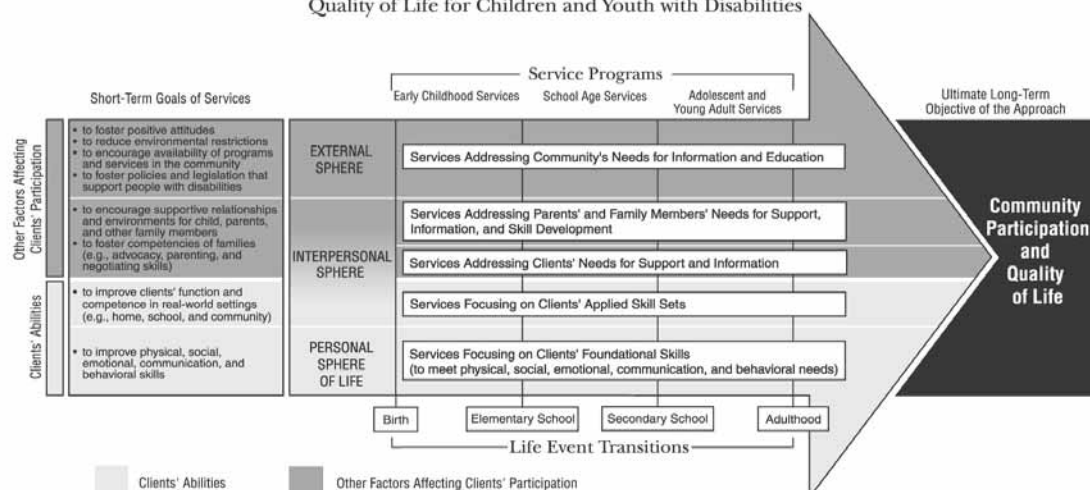
The Model requires services to be structured to provide programs that meet the needs of children at different ages and stages with a particular emphasis at times of transition such as when a child begins school.

The Model also requires services to be structured to support children in the different areas (or spheres) of their life: the personal sphere, the interpersonal sphere and the external sphere.

The following diagram attempts to illustrate how all of the aspects mentioned above fit together.

A Life Needs Model of Service Delivery

Services to Support Community Participation and Quality of Life for Children and Youth with Disabilities



The types of services that need to be offered include services that:

- focus on the child's foundation skills; these aim to improve the child's physical, social, emotional, communication and behaviour skills
- focus on the child's applied skill sets and address their need for support and information; to improve the child's ability to successfully complete tasks in real world settings e.g. home, school, community
- address parent's and family members' needs for support, information and skill development; to encourage supportive relationships and environments for the child, parents and other family members and to help families become skilled in areas such as, advocacy, parenting and negotiating skills
- address the community's needs for information and education; to foster positive attitudes, to reduce environmental restrictions, to encourage availability of programs and services in the community and to foster policies and legislation that support people with disabilities.

In order that Novita Children's Services provides services and programs that meet the complex needs of children and youth with disabilities it must ensure that services not only focus on developing the child's abilities as they grow and develop but also that they address the broad range of factors that we know impact on the child's ability to participate in all aspects of life.