

Loving Care

Public Health Service's new series of parent health education books

Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness

Loving Care is a strengths-based and capacity-building parent health education resource produced by the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness.

The easy to read series has been designed and written to meet the diverse learning needs of all families. At one time or another any family can experience challenges with literacy, lack of social support, lack of time to read, or limited access to health and parenting resources. **Loving Care** offers easy to understand early parenting information. The books are offered to all parents in Nova Scotia.

Development of **Loving Care** began in 2003, when a Working Group was struck to investigate parents' information needs and to develop materials for parents of children from birth to 3 years. The Working Group was made up of representatives from Public Health Services from across the province, the Reproductive Care Program, the IWK-based Extra Support for Parents program, Dartmouth Family Centre, and the provincial departments of Health and Wellness and Community Services.

To get both an overview of the field of parent education materials and insight into the specific wishes of Nova Scotian parents, in 2005 the Working Group commissioned consultants Susan Lilley and Phyllis Price to:

- Undertake a national and international scan of pre-existing parent resources
- Develop criteria for evaluating these resources
- Review existing literature on parent resources

- Hold focus groups with parents of young children of varying ages, races and ethnicities in urban and rural areas
- Conduct a workshop with stakeholders (professionals who work with target group)

Based on the findings of the Lilley/Price Report, the Working Group determined that the resource they developed would:

- Provide information that is “need to know,” rather than “nice to know.”
- Take a capacity-building approach that supports parents’ ability to parent, not a prescriptive approach.
- Do no harm. The Working Group would carefully consider how the reader could interpret the content.
- Be as socially and culturally inclusive as possible.
- Be comprehensive—that is, would include the information contained in the myriad pamphlets new parents routinely received.
- Be age paced—organized and distributed based on the baby’s age.
- Be written using plain language and at a literacy level lower than is current practice.

Research and writing of what became **Loving Care** began in 2006. Working with a writer, the Working Group proposed a series of four books. Three would be age paced:

- ***LOVING CARE: Birth to 6 months***
- ***LOVING CARE: 6 to 12 months***
- ***LOVING CARE: 1 to 3 years***

The fourth book, ***Loving Care: Parents and Families***, would focus on parent and family care, with health promotion and prevention messages geared to parents with children aged birth to 3 years.

Along with the Loving Care books, parents would receive ***Breastfeeding Basics***, an existing resource that offers more detailed information on breastfeeding. In line with Nova Scotia's breastfeeding policy and the WHO Baby Friendly initiative, information on formula feeding is not included in the Loving Care books. The Working Group developed a new resource, ***How to Feed Your Baby with Infant Formula***, to enable parents who made an informed decision to use infant formula to feed their babies safely.

The Working Group, Public Health staff and content experts reviewed drafts of each book as it was written. As well, each book was focus tested with the target audience. Focus groups included newcomers to Canada, young (teen) mothers, and rural, urban, LGBT, francophone, First Nations (NCNS), and lone parents. Reviewers included experts in the areas of breastfeeding support, social services, cultural inclusion, francophone/Acadian perspective, primary health care (nurses, physicians, midwives, a pediatric dentist, and dietitians), injury prevention, early childhood development and play, and public health.

The Working Group worked with a graphic designer to ensure that the books' design reflected the easy-to-read, use and understand approach taken in the writing. Loving Care is illustrated with full colour photographs of Nova Scotian parents and children.

All **Loving Care** books are translated into French. Bilingual Public Health staff review the French texts and Acadian-francophone parents participate in focus testing the translated drafts for reading comprehension.

Loving Care books are distributed in Nova Scotia by Public Health Services.