



Families

This section is for individuals and organizations that support, deliver, or provide environmental and sustainability education to individuals who identify themselves as members of a family unit.

Outcomes

Families will:

1. Participate in programs and activities that heighten environmental awareness and knowledge

Sample Indicators:

- Families acquire a working knowledge of contemporary environmental issues, both local and global.
- They understand the human place in the environment, and in ecosystems.
- They understand the notion of ecological **sustainability**, and the interrelationships among environment, society, economy, technology, and health.
- Families participate in local decision-making processes dealing with environmental issues and project approvals, and actively promote community environmental initiatives.
- Families make their views known to the media, schools, manufacturers, elected officials, and others to encourage environmentally sound practices and decisions.
- Through information sharing and by example, they influence others to be environmentally responsible.

2. Use their environmental knowledge as a framework in which to make family decisions

Sample Indicators:

- Families evaluate the environmental impacts of family practices to guide decisions to reduce or eliminate negative impacts (e.g., they use the **ecological footprint** to calculate their household environmental impact and compare it with households in other countries).
- They make lifestyle choices in terms of long-term environmental effects on children (e.g., the impact of



vehicle choice and use on climate change; food and energy consumption patterns).

- They “shop green” and consider the complete life cycle of products, recognizing environmental costs as part of the total cost of a product (e.g., they buy organic produce and local products, they avoid unnecessary packaging, and they “vote with their dollars” to support environmentally responsible companies).
- They adopt environmentally friendly practices and choices by turning off lights; reducing waste; composting; conserving energy and water; choosing lower impact transportation such as walking, cycling, public transit, and car-pooling; supporting sustainable technologies such as compact fluorescent bulbs, energy-saving appliances, fuel-efficient vehicles, solar panels, and “green” energy.
- Families tell their friends about the advantages of their preferred environmental lifestyle choices.
- As more families move society towards sustainable choices, there is less pollution, less smog, more windmills, healthier people and nature.

3. Engage in outdoor activities and active environmental **stewardship**

Sample Indicators:

- Families visit nature centres, nature trails, science centres, zoos, parks, and other natural areas for recreation, nature appreciation, and for learning about the natural world.
- They maintain and improve the natural environment around them (e.g., park naturalization, stream rehabilitation, and tree planting).
- Families grow in their appreciation of the human connections to and dependency on nature.

Needs

Families need:

- Mass education about environmental issues and the dependence of human health and well-being on a healthy natural environment
- An understanding of the financial and physical costs of not actively maintaining a healthy environment
- An understanding of **sustainability**, ecological concepts, and their relationship to society, the economy, technology, and human health
- Practical, engaging environmental information that is balanced, current, and scientifically accurate
- A better understanding of the relationship between everyday behaviours and healthy environments and families
- Exposure to concepts and tools, such as the **ecological footprint**, the life cycle of products, and environmental costing, that help them evaluate the environmental impacts of their actions
- Information on how to reduce their **ecological footprints**
- Environmentally friendly technologies that are cheaper, better advertised, and more widely available



- Awareness-building of the many ways they can contribute to maintaining a healthy environment
- An understanding that every person's choices and contributions count
- Information about available sustainable practices, products, and technologies that will let them make environmentally sound choices
- More involvement in conservation efforts and "citizen science" including ecological monitoring
- Incentives to develop environmentally sound practices in the home, and to use environmentally sustainable products, services, and technologies
- Increased awareness of nature facilities and their programs, and other experiences that increase **environmental literacy**
- More affordable opportunities to experience hikes, science centres, nature centres, zoos, parks, and other natural areas
- A deeper appreciation of and connection to nature
- Better media coverage and advertising that provides information about environmentally healthy choices and actions
- Government officials and decision-makers that consider their requests for quality **environmental education**
- Forums to examine and discuss their own values, the values of society, and the importance and potential conflict of those values in resolving environmental problems
- Success stories about the environmental efforts of other ordinary citizens

Strategies

Programs, Projects, and Policies

1. Provide universal E&SE to develop positive environmental attitudes and to promote conservation and **sustainability**.
2. Design school curriculum and activities to involve students with their family members in learning about environmental issues and ecological concepts.
3. Conduct research to determine Canadian family attitudes and knowledge relative to environmental issues and ecological concepts.
4. Conduct research to determine the most effective means for providing families with information on ecological concepts, sustainable decisions, and environmentally sound actions in the home and in the community.
5. Offer public tours to industrial sites, utilities, and other businesses that can provide opportunities for families to learn about environmental challenges and solutions.
6. Develop partnerships and share expertise among organizations from different sectors to improve the **environmental literacy** of families.
7. Provide courses on green shopping and home maintenance and energy efficiency.



8. Encourage families to adopt environmental mission statements and display them in their homes.
9. Encourage repairing items rather than disposing of them; teach the environmental impacts of waste.
10. Provide green public service announcements that promote sustainable practices such as fuel economy, energy efficiency, alternative energy, biodegradability, and reduced air emissions.
11. Establish staff at municipal, provincial, and utility offices who are responsible for providing public information about ecologically sustainable technologies, practices, and products.
12. Create sustainable living centres at street level, which provide centralized information about sustainable products, technologies, home retrofits, tax incentives, paybacks, carbon dioxide reductions, meeting the Kyoto Challenge, tree-planting and naturalization programs, as well as **environmental education** opportunities and programs.
13. Expand the program of the Environmental Commissioner's Office to inform families about Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights and the online registry.
14. Provide affordable or free family oriented experiences at zoos, science centres, nature centres, parks, summer camps, and other natural areas that include interactive displays, touch tables, pond studies, bird banding, interpretive hikes, group learning, and pamphlets.
15. Promote special events such as Earth Day, Recycling Week, Water Festival, and the Roots and Shoots Conference as ways for families to become better informed about environment-related topics.
16. Provide family oriented environmental programming through community organizations and the media (e.g. presentations, videos, and news features) that fosters a bond with and a respect for nature.
17. Support the connection of families to neighbourhoods, schools, churches, day care centres, libraries, and other community centres to provide forums for discussion and learning about environmental concepts and issues.

Resources

1. Provide and publicize a central clearinghouse website that provides families with current, scientifically accurate, **bias-balanced** information about environmental issues and environmentally sound choices.
2. Create more media opportunities for articles, programs, and ads that provide information about **ecological thinking** and environmentally sound practices, products, and technologies.
3. Use family frequented Ontario locations such as libraries, malls, and arenas to display information about environmental issues, ecological concepts, and environmentally sound practices and technologies.
4. Research family-directed environmental materials for effectiveness; develop, with the help of funding organizations, effective information materials designed to accommodate the range of ages within families.



Support

1. Provide financial incentives such as rebates, tax credits, and mortgage assistance for families who make use of environmentally friendly technologies such as low flush toilets, energy-saving retrofits, high efficiency furnaces, composters, cisterns, and solar and wind energy.
2. Recognize and build upon Canada's commitments to environmental and sustainability education in **Agenda 21**, the UNESCO principles, and the Framework for Environmental Learning and Sustainability in Canada.
3. Publicize environmental success stories.
4. Recognize environmental efforts and achievements through community awards and in the media.

Please see Appendix 1 for a list of useful websites.

