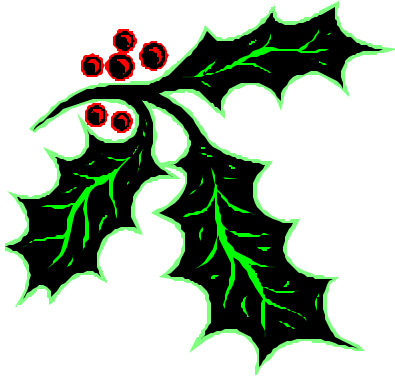


December 2004

DMFS Update



Seasons Greetings from DMFS!

The irony of the business that we are in is that sometimes the dedication and diligence that we demonstrate for CF families comes at great sacrifice to our own.

This holiday season, take the time to reconnect with your loved ones, and allow yourself to be supported by your family and friends.

The Best of the Season to All.



DMFS Staff from left to right: Andrew Webb, Madeleine Lafleur, Celeste Gotell, Linda Orrell, Alla Ivask, Celine Thompson, Beverly Weber, Linda Tyrrell, Sue McCormack, Eva Marks-Maclsaac and Jackie Specken. (Absent: Karen Dooks, Maureen Kellerman and Michel Morency)

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The Director's Cut



Celine Thompson,
Director

Photo: Tecklesphoto.com

The 'Way Ahead' has meant that a significant part of our energy at the Directorate has been devoted to developing and implementing more responsive and accountable service policies, governance frameworks and funding mechanisms and procedures. Although the work at the national or headquarters level has been momentous, we realize that this has had significant impact at the local level as well. Together we have worked at a near frantic pace, and have collectively changed the face of the Military Family Services Program across the country and in our Canadian Forces communities overseas and in the U.S.

As the calendar year draws to a close, this year of transition has witnessed all the various pieces of the puzzle coming together.

MFSP: Parameters for Practice has been on the streets for almost nine months ... a period of gestation that has allowed the Boards of

Directors, staff and volunteers to become accustomed to the new way of doing business: A way of doing business that is solidly based in established principles and values of family support, respects the third party status of Military Family Resource Centres, embraces the roles of Boards and volunteers, and firmly positions services as a means to meet positive outcomes for families.

The MFSP Funding Applications have been completed by the C/MFRCs (a +90% on-time response rate!) and are now being diligently reviewed by the staff at the Directorate. And, as you'll witness by this edition, the Memorandum of Understanding, and Service Delivery Agreement and Expenditure Reports will all be ready to roll in advance of April 1 2005. We are also holding out strong optimism that our evaluative framework and the Supplemental Agreement template will also be in

place before the next year of operations begins.

In the midst of all of this positive chaos however, we recognize that the heart of our business is not all governance and accountability, but rather a professional and indeed profound dedication to the resilience and strength of CF families. As the business of the business gradually becomes entrenched, we now move our efforts to the qualitative aspects of our work. You'll see some evidence of that renewed perspective in this edition as our eyes return to the child care requirements of CF families. Stay tuned also for more emphasis on Youth, Family Violence, and Availability of Services... both in terms of greater respect for both of our official language communities, as well as revisiting the defined MFSP target population.

Exciting times indeed.

Licensed Group Child Care

Results of the National Scan

In 1998, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA) observed that military families have to deal with unique situations brought about by the military lifestyle that intensify and complicate their child care requirements. More recently, during a national consultation, the theme of quality and affordable child care for military families was echoed (with resonance) by Military Family Resource Centres and other stakeholders of the Military Family Services Program (MFSP). Although licensed group child care is not a mandated service of the

MFSP, it continues to surface as a requirement of military families across the country, and is a service that is as a result often offered by MFRCs to fulfill an important need in their community.

To validate and verify the scope of the concerns with respect to this important issue, the Directorate Military Family Services worked in concert with the Military Family National Advisory Board (MFNAB) to conduct a Child Care Scan to determine the prevalence and need for licensed group child care services for military families. In spite of an inordinately short time span in which to par-

ticipate, 29 of the 34 Military Family Resource Centres in Canada responded to the web-based survey, and provided what will inevitably form the basis for the work that now needs to ensue.

The results of the research to date confirm the anecdotal evidence that preceded it: licensed group child care is indeed a priority for CF families. In addition, there are virtually universal concerns regarding the accessibility of care, particularly with respect to French speaking services, extended and flexible hours of operation, infant care and funding for quality, trained child care providers.

A copy of the resulting research report, and the presentation provided to the MFNAB in mid-November can be found at: www.cfpsa.com/en/psp/dmfs/index.asp

A Complicated Picture

Although the Child Care Scan served its purpose and provided a national picture of the prevalence and need for child care services for CF families, it also highlighted that the issues are not universally experienced. As a provincially regulated service, and one that is influenced to a significant degree by local, community factors, the experience of CF families across the country is not the same. The range in costs for child care in

different CF communities (from \$5.85 to \$55.00 per day, depending on age of child and location of family) is evidence of significant disparity. Further, some licensed group child care services are not filling the spaces they currently have available, while others have wait lists that virtually preclude newcomer families from accessing quality, licensed care for as long as a year from arrival to a new community. Different

licensing mandates of the Provincial governments further complicates the picture, and will either serve to facilitate or limit any local policy solutions that can address what is, for the CF, a national issue.

To add further complexity to what is already a complex situation, the requirements of CF families for licensed group child care is playing out against a backdrop of



(Continued on page 4)

Licensed Group Child Care

A Complicated Picture - continued

To read more about the federal government's Early Learning and Child Care Initiative, go to <http://www.sdc.gc.ca/> and <http://www.ccsd.ca/>

(Continued from page 3)

what is likely the strongest impetus for a national child care strategy that the country has witnessed. Long-time child care activists and policy makers are increasingly confident that the federal government's pursuit of a comprehensive Early Learning and Child Care initiative will significantly change the face of

Canada's system of child care, and they are predicting that these changes will happen as early as the next fiscal year. What this means is that the child care needs of CF families today may well not bear any resemblance to what they will be a short time from now. Further, although some predict that the government's emphasis

on quality, universal, and accessible care will result in a net-benefit for all families, still others predict – based on their experience in Quebec – that the initiative may result in heightened demand and still longer wait lists and frustration for families that need child care to participate in employment.

Where To From Here?

Admittedly, the changes anticipated in the national child care picture suggest a cautious approach in proceeding with what would otherwise be the next logical step in DMFS' attempts to assess and develop CF policy with respect to licensed group child care for CF families. The immediate, full determination of local need and national solutions will be premature if, as expected, the broader national policy, funding and standards are all on the brink of change. However, our own Child Care Scan revealed that the urgency regarding this important issue is "quite palpable" for CF families



and that the current gap between need and available service is high. When presented with the findings, the MFNAB cautioned against a 'wait and see' approach, as they very rightfully perceived a requirement for dedicated action irrespective of the dramatic shifts anticipated in both the local and national child care realms. As a result of this complex environment, DMFS will indeed be pursuing further action on this issue but in a way that respects the changing world we are in. Alla Ivask, DMFS Senior Manager Policy and Program Development, will be engaging representatives of the ministry of Social Development to work in collaboration with our

federal partners. These meetings are anticipated to serve two purposes: first, to stay abreast of the changing social policy environment to gauge the impact on CF families' child care needs; and, second, to attempt to influence the policy to best support our families' requirements. In addition, to ensure we are in the best position to work this issue from a national perspective, we will be working with Military Family Resource Centres to better understand local requirements as well as the multitude of provincial regulations that currently facilitate or limit our ability to provide quality, responsive child care. A

(Continued on page 5)

Licensed Group Child Care

Where To From Here? - continued

(Continued from page 4)

plan to facilitate this local consultation will be disseminated in the near future. It is also anticipated that we will determine an effective means to hear from the people that are most impacted by this issue: the CF families themselves. In the interim, we have published the results of

the Canadian Forces Families National Child Care Scan with a view to publicizing to all of our stakeholders the current national picture, and we will in the near term invite respondents to contribute to our deliberations regarding next steps. We are also asking that Military Family Resource Centres stay informed of

both local needs as well as national and provincial initiatives to help us best support the needs of CF families. We will be consulting with you regarding the way ahead, and we will be relying on your knowledge and expertise to ensure that we are, collectively, the best representatives to support the needs of CF families.

More information will be made available in subsequent editions of the DMFS Update

Stay Tuned

Military Family Services and Official Languages

Over the past several months, representatives from the DND Directorate of Official Languages (DOL) have visited a number of MFRCs. According to DOL, the purpose of the visits is two-fold: to increase the visibility of the Official Languages (OL) program and obtain feedback on the implementation of OL policies from those providing services in both official languages to families of military members. DOL representatives want to encourage and facilitate the implementation of Official Languages policy. They will make observations on the extent to which the MFRC is meeting OL requirements and will offer assistance if required.

The DND/CF policy on provision of OL services to military families was developed in 1997. It lists 24 CF locations where MFRCs must provide the following services in both official languages:

- information and referral services regarding availability of non-military services provided in the minority language in the community
- volunteers willing to assist unilingual CF family members in obtaining services from the local community; and
- coordination of programs to enhance the quality of life of families.

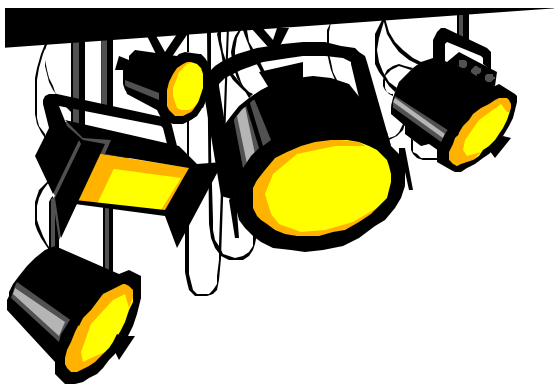
However, *MFSP: Parameters for Practice* includes broad guidelines that a p-

ply to all C/MFRCs. C/MFRC services should be provided in both official languages in accordance with the needs of the local CF community, as determined by the MFRC Board of Directors or as recommended by the CMFRC Advisory Committee. Notwithstanding community language profiles, each C/MFRC should have some ability to function in both official languages. (*Parameters*, p. 17, p. 21)

These guidelines in *Parameters for Practice* are intended to support achievement of MFSP standards with respect to provision of "accessible" services that reflect "the characteristics, back-

(Continued on page 11)

The current Official Languages policy can be found at: http://hr3.ottawa-hull.mil.ca/Dol/Engraph/famsvc_e.asp



The Main Event

The rehearsals are over, the curtain has risen and the performance is in the hands of the performers. The transition of the Military Family Services Program (MFSP) is DMFS' first and primary strategic priority for 2004/2005. "The Main Event" will keep you informed about what's happening on various stages to ensure a successful run.

Centre Stage

Moving Towards Program Accountability And Evaluation

In the fall of 2003, Director Military Family Services (DMFS) engaged Dr. Peter Gabor, Professor and specialist in program and service evaluation from Calgary University to work with the Directorate to develop a Program accountability and evaluation framework for the Military Family Services Program (MFSP). Dr. Gabor and DMFS were committed to the development of a simple, effective framework based the service goals and objectives set forth in *MFSP: Parameters for Practice*. The framework needed to yield useful information for DMFS and C/MFRCs without consuming all of the Centres' available resources or causing evaluation fatigue.

Logistics, timelines and resources prevented DMFS from engaging all of the possible stakeholders in the research and development process. Instead an Advisory Committee/Task Group with representation from all three service elements and large, small urban, and remote communities was convened to allow for consultation and to provide practical guidance to the project.

Developing Service Indicators

At a meeting of the Committee/Task Group in November 2003, Dr. Gabor presented a draft of the accountability framework and indicators for each of the MFSP mandated service component objectives. Throughout these consultations, as participants engaged in a variety of tasks, Dr. Gabor continually reminded the group to "keep it simple and focused on yielding data that will be meaningful and useful." The last task Dr. Gabor asked the group to complete was to prioritize the indicators that participants felt were important to report on in the 2005/06 fiscal year when *MFSP: Parameters for Practice* comes into effect. Without revealing the results to DMFS, Dr. Gabor tasked several members of DMFS to complete the same exercise. When the priority lists were compared, both groups prioritized the same 20 out of 23 indicators.

Developing Draft Evaluation Tools

The next steps were to create a "tool box" containing "tools" which Centres could use to report on the 20 priority indicators confirmed and finalized by DMFS; to provide regional training and to develop support mechanisms; and finally to close an existing, identified gap in the accountability framework – the absence of any indicators for the Values and Principles of the Program.

Equipped with all of the information, concerns and ideas shared by the Advisory Committee/Task Group, Dr. Gabor began the next phase of the project – assessing options for "tool box" contents, developing efficient and user-friendly methods of capturing both qualitative and quantitative data, exploring possible approaches to national data collection – all against the backdrop of Centres' realities and resources.

Exploring Options

In the fall of 2004, DMFS and Dr. Gabor reconvened the Advisory Committee/Task Group to examine drafts of data collection items associated with each of the prioritized indicators; to provide feedback on the overall accountability system; to discuss and develop procedures regarding sampling

Back Stage

and data collection issues; and to consider the possibility of a national evaluation system.

Advisory Committee/Task Group members brought forward many salient topics that were explored, discussed, debated and addressed, including:

- a national approach to data collection and data management;
- the selection of respondents, and the importance of developing strategies to capture “non-participants,” including parents of Reservists;
- respondent confidentiality, evaluation timeframes, and survey fatigue;
- how required accountability elements would align with other evaluation plans at the Centre level;
- training and technical support for evaluation;
- concerns that DMFS would link evaluation results to C/MFRC funding levels, resulting in a perceived need to develop elaborate evaluation strategies at the Centre level for all of the priority indicators; and finally
- the possibility of a national needs assessment system.

The Way Ahead

Both DMFS and the Advisory Committee/Task Group supported Dr. Gabor’s recommendation to proceed with a national accountability system using one national data collection instrument as presented by Dr. Gabor. Dr. Gabor’s proposed methodology is modeled on the process used in universities by students to evaluate their courses and professors. *Evaluation forms with check boxes would be filled out by respondents. Each evaluation form would be submitted in a sealed envelope to maintain confidentiality. Once Centres collect all of the sealed envelopes, they would be sent to DMFS. Forms would be scanned producing a comprehensive report.*

In addition to the obvious reasons, this particular method appealed to the Advisory Committee/Task Group because it was not labour intensive and required minimal commitment of resources on the part of Centres. This evaluation would eliminate the need for Centres to submit quarterly service statistical reports to DMFS, as outlined in *Parameters for Practice* and early drafts of the Memorandum of Understanding between DND and the MFRCs.

The Advisory Committee/Task Group recommended that the timeframe for data collection be the same for all Centres, and suggested a three week period sometime during the last quarter (January – March) of the fiscal year. The choice of the three-week period within that quarter would be left to the discretion of each Centre. Although somewhat of a prescriptive approach, it was agreed that the benefits of the methods outweighed the disadvantages. Consideration was given to the fact that:

- Conducting the evaluation within a specific timeframe facilitates planning, lessening potential incidents of survey fatigue, and allows for aligning the national evaluation with a Centre’s local evaluation efforts.
- There would be some control over the variance that could occur if some Centres chose to evaluate during “peak times” whilst others opted for “slower times.”
- It would be easier to collect, input, manage data and produce a comprehensive report.

Through these discussions, participants understood that DMFS is equally accountable for the Program it funds, and that the “new national approach” concept would not only provide the data required by DMFS for its own accountability purposes, but would also provide data that could be used for marketing the Program and communicating its future needs. Members of the Advisory Committee/Task Group also concluded that more in-depth service evaluation at the Centres’ level would be required to meet their local needs, and recommended that DMFS consider developing the “tool box”.

Supporting Local Evaluation

The Advisory Committee/Task Group identified options for supporting local evaluation efforts, such as: *(Continued on page A3)*

Stage Left

Accountability and Evaluation—continued

(Continued from page A2)

- Regional training workshops for staff, particularly on practical issues, including “how to develop tools at the local level.”
- Developing a “train the trainer” model.
- Developing a network of evaluation committees.
- Technical support through a 1-800 number.

Next Steps

Over the next several months, Dr. Gabor will refine the national data collection tools and reporting systems based on the discussions and feedback provided by all members of the Advisory Committee/Task Force. The near final iteration will be circulated to members of the Advisory Committee/Task Group for final comments and DMFS approval. Simultaneously, DMFS has committed to begin work on the creation of the evaluation “tool box” for local use.

The November 2004 meetings of the Advisory Committee/Task Group were hosted at the Toronto MFRC. On behalf of all participants, DMFS would like to thank the Toronto MFRC for its gracious hospitality and the use of its inspiring facility.

Update on the Memorandum of Understanding

The 2002 Follow-up Program Evaluation Study on the Military Family Service Program (MFSP) noted that an appropriate mechanism needed to be developed for DMFS to provide public funds to Military Family Resource Centres (MFRCs). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been approved by Treasury Board for this purpose. Assistant Deputy Minister (Human Resources - Military) (ADM (HR-Mil)) has approved 1 April 2005 as the implementation date for the MOU.

The MOU outlines the respective roles and responsibilities of DMFS, the MFRC and the local Commander to ensure the effective delivery of the MFSP. To date, the provisions in the MOU are not significantly different from summaries previously provided to MFRC Boards of Directors and local Commanding Officers.

Each MFRC will have its own MOU with the Department of National Defence, however the MOUs will be identical to one another except for the paragraph that specifies the amount of public funds to be provided to the MFRC from DMFS for fiscal year 2005-2006.

It is anticipated that an electronic version of the MOU will be forwarded for information purposes to MFRC Boards of Directors and local Commanding Officers early in January. The specifics of any recent changes that have been made in the MOU will be highlighted in a cover letter. In February/March 2005, DMFS will forward hard copies of the "official" MOU for signature by the MFRC Board Chair (or designate) and the local Commanding Officer (CO). These copies will be signed by ADM (HR-Mil) prior to local distribution.

The MOU provides for the development of a local Supplemental Agreement between the MFRC and the local CO. This Agreement is intended to document use of federal real property by the MFRC, the specifics of any O&M and infrastructure support provided by the base to the MFRC, and resources to be provided by the base to support identified MFRC site-specific services and/or to enhance mandated services.

DQOL and DMFS are in the process of developing a template for the Supplemental Agreement that MFRCs and local COs will use to create a customized document. More information will be provided at a later date.

Stage Right

Technical Review of the Excel Based Funding Application

The results are in from the web survey regarding the Excel based Funding Application.

The answers ranged from “too long” to “too short”, and from “too much detail” to “not enough room for detail.” Not a surprising result, given the unique character of each of the Canadian/Military Family Resource Centres.

A preliminary review of the responses indicates that there is a great deal of support for the format and layout of the Funding Application, and the Users’ Guide was generally useful. For some respondents there were considerable problems with formulas, inserting information and cutting and pasting from other sources. We also heard several times that site-specific information should be reported in the Financial Summary, and that the Users’ Guide needs some modifications including removing policy and background information and adding more detail and examples about what should go in the Application.

We heard several comments about the support received from Field Operations Managers and how important it was to the successful completion of the Application. (This has been informally supported by our so-far preliminary review of the Funding Applications received: those Centres that sought out the support of the Field Operations Managers have, by and large, submitted applications with less errors and greater clarity.) There were a number of ways that information from the Funding Application was being used by C/MFRCs to inform their stakeholders and guide their work, and a number of suggestions for what sort of reports and summaries would be useful in the future.

It was interesting to note that there were only a few examples of other web-based funding applications being used in the broader sector. We may be forging ahead into new territory with our new web-based tool, which will be on-line in 05/06 for the 06/07 funding year.

DMFS would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to this questionnaire. It is important that our partners affirm and challenge our work. Your feedback will be reviewed and weighed in context with the best interests of the Military Family Services Program.

Additional Funding Opportunity for C/MFRCs

Director Military Family Services (DMFS) has secured additional funding consideration for the Military Family Services Program (MFSP) as a result of the FY 04/05 public funding cyclical review process. This extraordinary year-end funding in turn creates a new, *non-recurring* funding opportunity for C/MFRCs.

All proposed initiatives that fit the criteria as well as the anticipated budget as disseminated in a letter from DMFS dated 29 November 2004, must be submitted to the C/MFRC’s assigned Field Operations Manager for approval via email no later than 15 December 2004. (*A detailed proposal is not required; a few sentences that explain the initiative will suffice.*) Given the short timelines, approval from DMFS will also be provided via mail. Copies of the emails should be retained at the C/MFRC.

C/MFRCs are also advised that there may be additional, non-recurring funding opportunities that arise later this fiscal year. Should these funding opportunities occur, there will be short-notice notification with again the expectation that C/MFRCs be in a position to expend the funds prior to 31 March. To prepare for this potential opportunity, it would be in C/MFRCs’ best interest to have tabulated a list of unfunded projects that are not recurring in nature, are sanctioned by the relevant C/MFRC authority, and that support the mandated elements of the MFSP. Those C/MFRCs that undertake this task now will be in the best position to capitalize on any funding flexibility afforded the MFSP later this fiscal year.

Off Broadway

Review of 2005-06 Funding Applications Well Underway

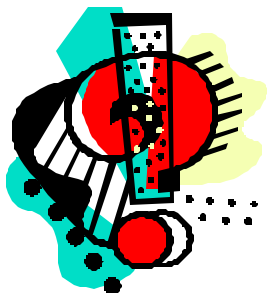
The First Level Review of 2005/2006 MFSP Funding Applications concluded 3 December 2004. Recommendations for funding levels for each Canadian/Military Family Resource Centre (C/MFRC) have been forwarded to the Second Level Review committee. The First Level Review consisted of a detailed individual and comparative analysis of each Funding Application using the questions from MFSP: Parameters for Practice 2004, pp. 57-59, and in the context of C/MFRC demonstrated level of volunteer involvement, established partnerships, historical funding levels, and community demographics, dispersion of population served, operational tempo, and isolation.

The quality of service and the dedication to CF families was inherent in all MFSP Funding Application submissions received. As a result the review process will continue to be both challenging and enlightening for the staff of this Directorate. C/MFRCs are thanked for their concerted efforts in this regard.

C/MFRCs are reminded that the MFSP Funding Application review is a three level process. The first level makes recommendations to the second level; the second level reviews, challenges, debates and discusses the first level recommendations. The results of both first and second level are submitted to the Director, who is informed by the preceding review and deliberation, but is ultimately accountable and responsible for finalizing funding decisions. As allocations will not be determined until the Director has finalized her portion of the review, disclosure of specific information in the interim would be speculative and potentially inaccurate and misleading. As a result, DMFS is unable to provide individual feedback and only finalized funding decisions will be forwarded to Centres via email and hard copy 31 January 2005.

Again, the Directorate passes on its thanks to all stakeholders that participated in the funding application process. Although admittedly arduous for some, the process has allowed this Program for the first time in its history to identify global, projected costs of service delivery. Subsequent financial reports submitted by C/MFRCs will further facilitate the assignment of the limited total funding envelope to ensure maximum support for CF members and their families.

Since you asked ...



Why is the Funding Application being reviewed before the Funding Cycle is complete?

In an ideal situation, we would have completed a full iteration of the funding cycle and evaluated in whole and in part prior to changing various elements. Unfortunately (or fortunately depending on your perspective), funds were made available for the development of a web-based format *this* fiscal year through National Defence On Line (NDOL) and we were advised that similar resources would not be available next year. Therefore, DMFS proceeded under less than ideal conditions in an effort to maximize the available resources to provide the best possible tools for the Program.

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grounds, needs and circumstances of participants.” (*Parameters*, p. 18) The OL guidelines also reflect the MFSP values of “inclusion, diversity and community participation.” (*Parameters*, p. 8) While acknowledging the inherent strengths of all CF families, MFSP stakeholders recognize that minority language families may need extra support to become oriented to new communities and to function comfortably.

As a result, the goal of MFSP Second Language Services is to “support the language needs and choices” of CF family members. To achieve this goal, C/MFRCs should ensure that their community needs assessments take into account the language profile of the local CF community. These assessments should assist C/MFRCs to develop a coherent, planned approach to addressing the needs of minority language families.

C/MFRC service plans should be designed to meet the objectives of MFSP Second Language Services. One objective is to make available “Resources and information... in the official language(s) required by the local CF community.” (p. 31) In practical terms, this means that, at a minimum, reception services, MFRC brochures and newsletters, and the MFRC web site should be bilingual to the extent that available resources allow. It should not mean that bilingual materials and services are only available “on-demand.”

DMFS is committed to working with DOL and C/MFRCs to clarify expectations with regards to provision of bilingual services and to enhance the capacity of Centres to serve both official language groups in their respective communities.

In upcoming issues of the DMFS Update and In Focus, DMFS will be featuring articles on the Strengthening the Forces Health Promotion Program to provide more information to C/MFRCs on the various components of the program.

The following documents have been distributed electronically to all C/MFRC Board Chairpersons and Executive Directors between 1 September and 30 November 2004. If you did not receive a copy please contact Francine St-Amour at St-Amour.FC@forces.gc.ca

General Documents	File Number	Date Sent
DMFS Update September 2004	5390-8-12	20 Sep 04
National Youth Model Financial Planning Results	5390-8-5	25 Sep 04
SLT 2004-05 Winter Session Changes Letter	5390-8-12	29 Sep 04
C/MFRCs In Focus September 2004	5390-12	30 Sep 04
National Youth Model Engaging Youth Project Letter	5390-8-5	26 Oct 04
Accountability Framework and Evaluation Working Group Request for Volunteers letter	5390-7	7 Oct 04
Accountability Framework and Evaluation Working Group—New Members Letter	5390-7	21 Oct 04
Synergy—Integrated Approaches in Family Support Letter	5390-7-2	25 Oct 04