

Intensive In-Home Service

Issue #13

It is difficult to describe the excitement that a group of professionals feels when they are presented with the opportunity to create a new program 'from scratch', and it is even more extraordinary when this program is exactly what has been missing from the offerings of an agency that is committed to helping its clients in any way possible. The launch of the George Hull Centre Intensive In-Home Service on January 2, 2020 represents the culmination of several years of planning, research, collaboration, and training, and carries aloft our hope and our determination to provide support and healing to children and families exactly where they need it: in their homes, and in their communities.

Our Intensive In-Home Service addresses the needs of youth ages 12-17 with complex mental health concerns, and their families, in the context of their life spaces: at home, at school, and in their communities. We have learned that youth do not experience the sense of abandonment and rejection that is often associated with out-of-home placements, and that positive changes and behavioural gains can be applicable and sustainable in a family's daily experience.

Residential treatment remains an important and effective intervention for youth and families who can benefit from the temporary separation and creation of personal and emotional space that it affords. Families who have been involved with our Libby's Place residential program for adolescent girls, for example, often talk about how effective 'turning down the heat' in their family relationships has been, especially combined with the family therapy sessions that the girls and the caregivers participated in. There are, however, many families and youth in Toronto who do not require the separation of residential placement, and who would be better served with In-Home support. The following are a few examples of youth and families for whom In-Home Service would be a preferred alternative:

- Youth who are adopted and experience placement out of home as further abandonment or rejection.
- Youth with anxiety disorders who struggle with leaving home and are often excluded from residential treatment as they refuse to attend.
- Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder who struggle with the overwhelming environment of residential programs.
- Youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for whom group care is contra-indicated.\
- Families who have concerns about having their child leave their care.
- Families who have concerns about their child learning new and problematic behaviours due to the influence of peers in group care.
- Foster families who are very committed to the youth in their care but who need intensive support on order to preserve the placement.

The Intensive In-Home clinical team consists of two Family Therapists, four In-Home Workers, and our consulting Psychiatrist. The Family Therapists will develop the overall treatment plans for each client family and provide weekly family therapy. The In-Home workers will provide six to twelve hours weekly of in-home support, parent coaching, behaviour planning, and other interventions according to the treatment plan and the treatment goals that are generated by the family together with the clinical team.

For many families, the focus of the in-home treatment is communication and attachment. The clinical team has undertaken extensive and ongoing training in Dr. Dan Hughes Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), an attachment focused treatment model that specializes in addressing the needs of complex families with disrupted attachment relationships and trauma. In addition to DDP, the clinical team will also utilize elements of other modalities like Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

The In-Home Workers also work with youth in the community. Adolescence is characterized by the developmental tasks of separation and individuation. This means that youth are developing important relationships as individuals in their communities. For the clients who we see, this stage is often problematic. Anxious youth are unable to leave the family home, and youth with

behavioural issues often impact negatively on their communities. The In-Home Workers play an important role in helping youth connect in a positive way with peers and within their communities.

As the Intensive In-Home Service team embarks on this endeavour of service and discovery, we will keep you, loyal readers of The George, informed of our successes, our lessons learned, and our impact on the youth and the families that we serve.

