



*Building Better Services for Children and Youth who are Victims or Witnesses of Crime in Canada
Prestation de services améliorés aux enfants et aux adolescents qui ont été victimes ou témoins d'actes criminels au Canada*

NOVA SCOTIA

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT SERVING CHILD VICTIMS & WITNESSES IN NOVA SCOTIA

SHOWCASE PROGRAM #1:

IWK Child Protection Team

<http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/index.cfm?objectID=D2A7EC3D-F280-D530-B41777A2F7005A2C>

The IWK Health Centre's Child Protection Team (CPT) provides compassionate and comprehensive assessment, management, and treatment to Maritime children where allegations or concerns of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or neglect are identified. The team is

- based in the Maritimes' largest tertiary care children's health centre
- one of two such teams in eastern Canada
- comprised of pediatricians with expertise in child abuse assessment, social workers, a clinical nurse specialist, psychologist, and administrative coordinator
- uses an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to provide direct service, consultation and counseling to children and families
- active in advocacy, education, and research in the area of child maltreatment.

The CPT enjoys strong relationships with multiple community-based organizations, including the

Counselling for Children Who Witness Intimate Partner Violence



You can get help for your child,
with counselling from the
Criminal Injuries Counselling Program.

Front page of the brochure that tells parents and guardians how to recognize symptoms of trauma in babies through to teens; and how to apply for counselling for children and youths, paid directly by the province."

Department of Community Services, Regional Police, RCMP, and the Avalon Sexual Assault Response Centre's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program. Within the hospital, the CPT works in an integrated manner with other medical care teams (i.e. Emergency, Ambulatory, In-patient) and programs (i.e. Mental Health and Addictions). Communications are enhanced by daily consultation and information-sharing, and during bi-monthly "Multidisciplinary Child Protection Rounds", in which current issues and challenges encountered are discussed to strengthen working relationships.

SHOWCASE PROGRAM #2:

Victim Services, Counselling for Children Who Witness Intimate Partner Violence

http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/victim_services/

In 2008, the Criminal Injuries Counselling Program expanded to offer professional counselling services for children exposed to domestic violence. Children are affected by violence in their family and it can hurt as much as if the violence was done to them. After the intimate partner violence has been reported to police, an application can be submitted to the program for children under the age of 19. The application is processed when the police report is available for review. After the application is approved, counselling can be provided by private counselling practitioners within the community. Counsellors must apply to become approved counsellors with the program. The counsellors bill our program directly for service provided. It is hoped that the counseling intervention will help to mitigate the potentially long term damaging effects of the violence on the child's life.

SHOWCASE PROGRAM #3:

IWK Mental Health Child Welfare Team (IWK-CWT)

The IWK-CWT serves local children and families who are receiving services from the Department of Community Services. The IWK-CWT provides support to children who are exposed to child maltreatment, including comprehensive assessment of youth and family, child

psychotherapy, parent and foster parent consultations relevant to the child's mental health, and group programming.

SHOWCASE PROGRAM #4:

Victim Services, Child Victim/Witness Program

http://www.gov.ns.ca/just/victim_Services/programs.asp#CVWP

Children who become involved in the criminal justice system may have to testify in court because someone has hurt them or because they have seen a crime taken place. At this difficult time, children and their parents can receive assistance from the Child Victim Witness Program. It is a core specialized, non-evidentiary court preparation program of Victim Services. Court preparation is provided through a minimum of two face-to-face sessions with the child, a courtroom tour, support at meetings with the Crown, court accompaniment, de-briefing after testifying, booster meetings prior to subsequent hearings, Victim Impact Statement assistance and a closure session after completion of the court process.

SHOWCASE PROGRAM #5:

Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team (MHMCT)

<http://www.halifax.ca/police/documents/403446CapitalHealthFlyersNov26.pdf>

The MHMCT is a partnered crisis support service of Capital Health, IWK Health Centre, Halifax Regional Police and Nova Scotia Department of Health which provides a consistent integrated response to mental health crisis in the community regardless of which service identifies the individual in crisis. The MHMCT includes mental health professionals and dedicated police officers who offer confidential, non-judgmental crisis support to children, youth, and adults experiencing a mental health crisis. Telephone support is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and the Team is "mobile" between 11:00 am to 11:00 pm. Short-term crisis management is provided until other supports/services are in place or the crisis resolves.

NEXT STEPS:

Child Advocacy Centre Initiative

The need has been recognized in Nova Scotia to improve coordination and collaboration between Departments and agencies offering services to children and youth. Relevant Nova Scotian agencies have joined together to lay the foundation for the creation of a Maritime Child Advocacy Centre (CAC), with the aim to improve service collaboration and reduce system-induced trauma for children and families.

An environmental scan to (1) inform our planning, (2) assess our community's readiness, and (3) develop stakeholder linkages is underway. To date, identified partners include the IWK Health Centre Child Protection Team and Mental Health and Addictions Program, NS Department of Justice Victims Services, NS Department of Community Services, NS Public Prosecution Service, RCMP, Halifax Regional Police, community-based women's services.

- Our goals for attending this KE are to:
- Obtain insight and experience-based knowledge from groups who have developed a CAC
- Take away "lessons learned" from those CAC's already established
- Incorporate, based on experiences of others, key principles into our development pathway

CHALLENGES

- Long wait times for mental health services
- Limitations in available mental health services specific to child victims/witnesses
- Consistency in specialized investigative child interviewer training
- Access to supports for caregivers and non-offending parents (including limited access to Recreational Therapists)
- Provision of focused and coordinated strategies to enhance prevention of child maltreatment and family violence
- Limited resources to cover large geographical areas combined with an increase in child victim/witness cases.
- Consistency in referrals of child victim/witness cases across the province