

Developing a Service Model for Child & Youth Advocacy Centres

September 29, 2016



Agenda

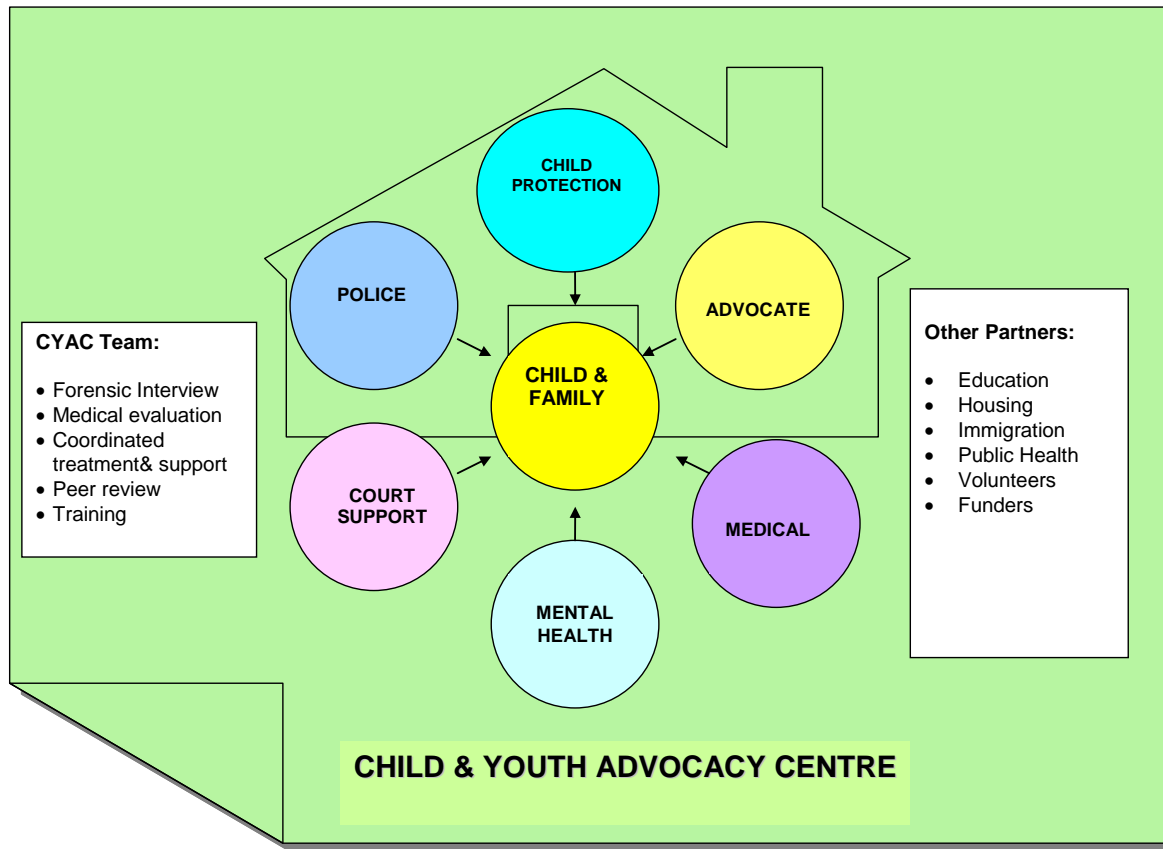
Determining & Developing an Effective CYAC Service Model:

- **Review of the components of a CYAC**
- **Goals of a CYAC**
- **Developing a service model**
- **Investigations at the CYAC**
- **Case reviews**
- **Training and professional development**
- **Stakeholder and media communication**

What is a Child & Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC)?

- **A Child & Youth Advocacy Centre is a multidisciplinary service where a team of highly-skilled and trained law enforcement, criminal justice, child protection, medical, mental health, victim services and/or advocacy professionals coordinate and collaborate on child abuse cases for the benefit of children, youth and their families, the community and the broader systems.**
- **The CYAC integrates a continuum of services, usually from one central hub that includes investigation, protection, victim support and/or advocacy, medical and mental health assessment and treatment, and follow-up care in a child-friendly environment.**

What is a Child & Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC)?



Goals of a CYAC are to provide:

- a child-friendly facility that is comfortable for children/youth and is both psychologically and physically safe;
- a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) approach in which the CYAC works with police, child protection, medical and mental health professionals, and victim advocates;
- highly skilled and trained forensic interviewers who gather information thereby avoiding repeat, sequential interviews of the child;
- medical evaluation either at the CYAC or through collaboration with specialized medical service providers;

Goals of the CYAC are to provide:

- **specialized mental health services provided either at the CYAC or in co-operation with collateral providers;**
- **ongoing and consistent victim support/advocacy;**
- **case reviews with the MDT conducted on a consistent basis to share information, plan and co-ordinate services; and**
- **case tracking and evaluation to monitor case progress, service outcomes and the efficacy of the program.**

Developing a Service Model

- **In determining the model that you want to utilize in your CYAC, you will first need to decide what you want to accomplish.**
- **For example, is your goal to reduce the number of times that a child is interviewed, or the number of people/places that they encounter?**
- **If your goal is to improve the investigation, resulting in better interviews and more guilty pleas, then your service model may need to be focused on improved forensic interviewing.**
- **It is important to ensure that all of your CYAC partners share the same goal(s) and that you have a clear understanding of your community needs.**

Developing a Service Model

- **In Toronto, for example, we conducted a survey with front-line police officers and child protection investigators to gather information about what was working well and what was not.**
- **We learned that the protocol for joint investigations was not being followed regularly; children were being interviewed in police stations, and service providers were not working together or communicating effectively.**
- **This led to a decision to focus the model on improving communication between service providers, creating a child-friendly location, increasing the number of joint investigations, and bringing services together under one roof.**

Developing a Service Model

- **Not all CYACs are able to offer the same services.**
- **In some centres, it may be difficult to provide a comprehensive range of services from investigation through to court support and follow-up due to lack of resources, large geographic areas or because some of these services are provided in other ways.**
- **However, CYACs can still make a significant difference in the way reports of child abuse are managed.**
- **Providing a safe, child-friendly setting for interviews to be conducted is important and sets the tone for the investigation process.**

Developing a Service Model

- **Creating structures and processes for professionals to work together is a key component of a CYAC. It is possible to utilize a multidisciplinary approach even if it is not a co-located model.**
- **Regular meetings with representatives of the systems involved in child abuse investigations is not a new concept and one that may already exist in your community.**
- **Establishing regular formal and informal meetings to:**
 - **review how professionals are working together;**
 - **review how cases promote communication and build trust;**
 - **regularly provide feedback with respect to the operations of the CYAC, addressing both practical, operational/administrative matters (e.g., transportation for clients, use of the facility, equipment upgrades); and**
 - **address MDT issues (e.g., communication, case decision-making, documentation and record keeping).**

Developing a Service Model

- **Deciding what services your CYAC will provide is dependent on your partner organizations, and what the needs are in your community.**
- **Looking at the gaps in your community will help you to determine what services are needed and can be offered by the CYAC. This can be done through a needs assessment or feasibility study.**
- **It may not always be possible to provide a comprehensive range of services where there are resource issues or other limitations, but by looking at where the greatest needs are and how the CYAC can meet those needs, it is possible to make significant improvements in how services are delivered.**

Developing a Service Model

- For services that are not delivered directly at the CYAC, establishing links to service providers in the community and helping to facilitate those connections for children and families is valuable.
- Including those service providers as partners helps to engage them in the CYAC model.
- For example, having onsite medical evaluation may not be possible, but developing a relationship with a nurse practitioner/physician/hospital that can respond efficiently to cases from the CYAC is helpful.
- Ideally having a consistent medical professional or team to consult with, and for planning purposes is an asset.
- The same is true for other professionals, such as therapists, victim support workers and others.

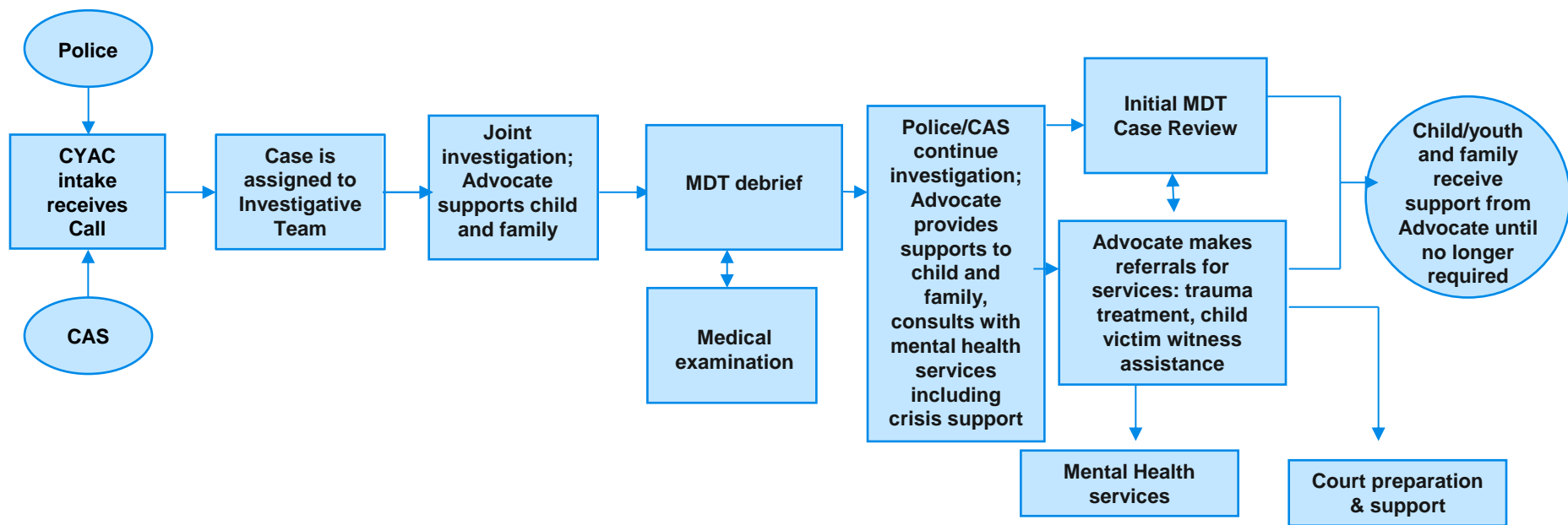
Developing a Service Model

- **Once you have determined the services that the CYAC will offer, either in the centre or through links in the community, it is necessary to create a flow of service or map that can be followed by everyone involved.**
- **To do this, it is necessary to look at how cases are managed at present in your community and what you would need or want to change.**
- **The goal is to make the process easier for children and families and improve coordination between professionals.**
- **In most jurisdictions, reports are made first to child protection or police. Depending on the process in your community, you will need to decide how cases are referred to the CYAC.**

Developing a Service Model

- In CYACs with onsite MDTs, reports are usually received by police or child protection supervisor and assigned to an Investigative Team who will assume responsibility for the investigation.
- An Advocate may also be assigned to the case and becomes a member of the team. Once the investigation begins, medical and mental health workers are often added to the team, either for consultation or to see the child and/or family directly.
- The Investigative Team will make all of the decisions at that time related to the initial interview(s), including where it will take place.

Developing a Service Model



Investigations at the CYAC

- 1. A report of suspected child abuse is received by child protection or police at the CYAC and assigned to an Investigative Team.**
- 2. In centres where Advocates are available, an Advocate is assigned to work with the Investigative Team and offer support to the child/family.**
- 3. The Investigative Team notifies the Advocate of the date and time of the forensic interview(s).**
- 4. Upon arrival at the CYAC, the Advocate greets the child/youth/family, orients them to the centre, and establishes them in the waiting room/playroom.**
- 5. The Advocate will facilitate introductions of the Investigative Team to family members.**

Investigations at the CYAC

- **Pre-investigation discussion between police and child protection:**
 - **history**
 - **safety; other children in the home**
 - **needs of the family (e.g., interpreter)**
 - **where/when the interview should occur (e.g., CYAC, hospital, school)**
 - **who will lead the interview**
 - **who will contact the caregiver/schedule interview(s)**
 - **consult with medical and mental health clinician (if needed)**

Investigations at the CYAC

- **The Advocate waits with and provides support to child/youth/family members until all interviews are completed.**
- **During this time the Advocate:**
 - **advises child/youth/family members that the Advocate cannot discuss details of the abuse;**
 - **reviews confidentiality and duty to report obligations;**
 - **provides information about the Child & Youth Advocacy Program and services available; and**
 - **obtains consents for all services (e.g., advocacy, mental health, medical) so that the MDT can share information with each other and involved collaterals (e.g., community treatment providers).**

Investigations at the CYAC

- **Following the joint investigative interview(s), a debrief meeting is held with the MDT. The purpose of the debrief is to share information gathered to date and plan next steps.**
- **The Advocate shares questions/concerns raised by the family, as well as potential crisis/mental health concerns.**
- **Following the debrief, the Advocate joins the Investigative Team to meet with the family to provide information on next steps in the investigation and services available within the CYAC and community.**
- **If immediate crisis support is identified, the Advocate will facilitate introductions between the mental health clinician and the family.**

Case Reviews

- **Regular case reviews should be conducted with all MDT members and collaterals involved in the case (e.g., school personnel, community treatment providers) to share concerns and discuss ongoing planning.**
- **Case reviews are a collaborative, formal process where information, experience and expertise are shared by participants with a view to making child-centered informed decisions in the best interests of the children, youth and families served by the CYAC.**

Purpose of Case Reviews

- **Case reviews are intended to track and monitor cases, provide mutual support, and promote shared responsibility.**
- **Through the sharing of appropriate information from each participant and reviewing all of the aspects of the case, the goals of case review meetings are to:**
 - **provide a comfortable and safe place to discuss cases, including problems, issues and concerns;**
 - **address the needs of children and their families in an appropriate, timely, efficient and coordinated manner;**
 - **reduce the trauma and confusion for children, youth and families;**

Purpose of Case Reviews

- offer direction;
 - determine courses of action and facilitate progress; and
 - provide an opportunity for cross-disciplinary education, to increase everyone's understanding and appreciation of the complexity of child abuse cases, and the roles of each individual/organization involved.
- The following list includes, but is not limited to, what to consider when determining if/when a case should be brought forward for review. Case reviews are useful:
- when there are immediate safety concerns, including [possibility of] apprehension;
 - where there has been a criminal charge(s);

Purpose of Case Reviews

- **when there are concerns about the caregiver's ability to support the child;**
- **when the abuse has resulted in serious physical injury;**
- **where there are concerns about emotional/mental stability;**
- **when there is high visibility (e.g., media exposure);**
- **when there are exhibiting dynamics that pose obstacles to the progress of the case (e.g., conflicting allegations, high-risk of recantation);**

Purpose of Case Reviews

- **when cases involve multiple victims or perpetrators;**
- **when cases include custody and/or visitation disputes;**
- **when a child protection case is being transferred to ongoing services;**
- **where progress has not occurred as anticipated; and**
- **where reunification is being considered.**

Training & Professional Development

- **The MDT should participate in ongoing and relevant training and educational opportunities, including across disciplines, peer review and skills-based learning.**
- **Ongoing learning is critical to the successful operation of CYACs. The CYAC should identify and/or provide relevant educational opportunities. These should include topics that are relevant to all disciplines, are MDT focused, and enhance the skills of the MDT members.**
- **CYACs should strive to create an atmosphere of trust and respect that fosters opportunities for open communication and enables MDT members to share ideas and raise concerns.**

Stakeholder & Media Communication

- **Educating your community about your CYAC is an important step in raising awareness and building support.**
- **You can do this in a number of ways:**
 - **host an information session for stakeholders**
 - **issue a media release**
 - **attend existing community meetings or networks to provide information**
 - **present to your local city/town council**
 - **schedule radio/television/print interviews**

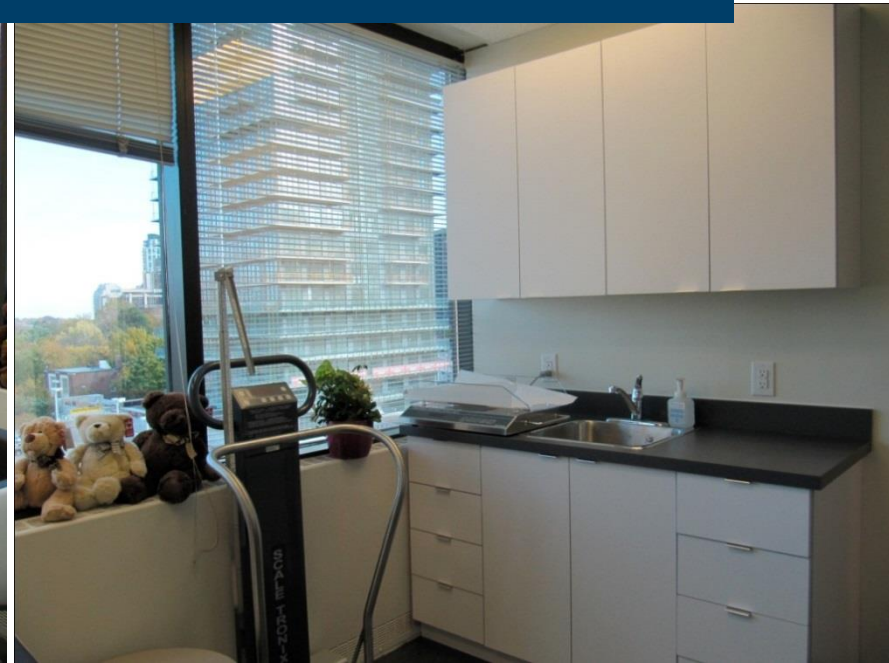
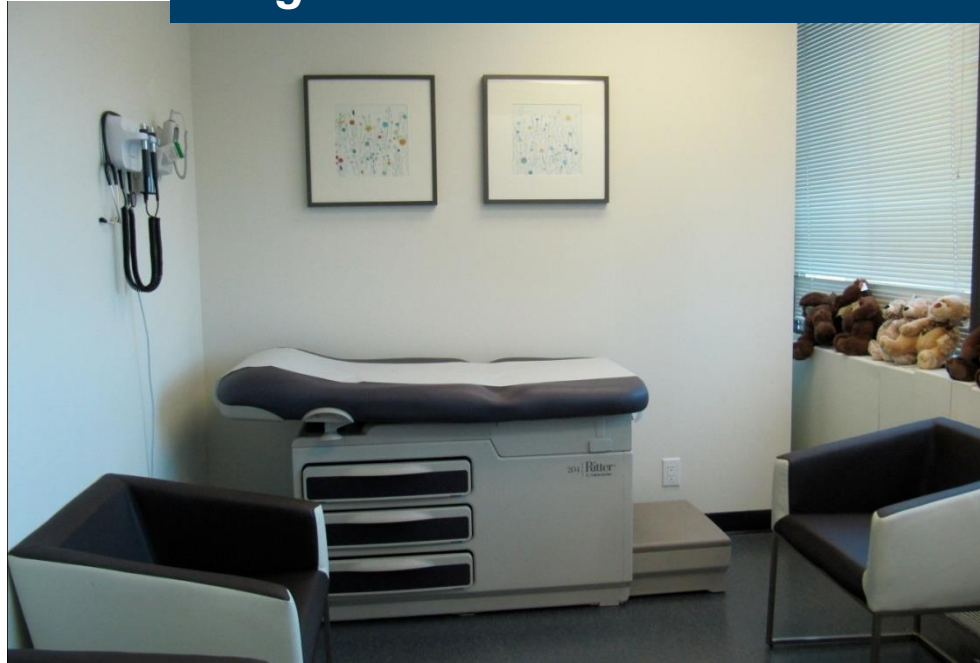
Stakeholder & Media Communication

- **Once your centre is open, you can invite funders, politicians and interested community members for tours.**
- **This will give you an opportunity to show how the model works, and to explain what is different in the CYAC compared to the way investigations were previously conducted.**
- **Collecting data to share can be valuable, particularly if you can show the benefits of your centre.**
- **Testimonials from children/youth and families often provide powerful information about the benefits of a CYAC.**



“Having all of it under one roof, so we didn’t have to keep repeating the information, or search out services was very helpful and made dealing with everything much easier and less emotionally draining. This is an excellent program and you can tell that everyone involved really cares about the clients and whatever the needs are. Thank you so much.”

“The medical was not what I thought, it was comfortable for my daughter and it made the experience more kid like and I was nervous when it was being done since the nurse explained it to me. The advocate was still there when everyone else left. I knew if I needed anything I could call her and she would help me and my daughter.”



Contact Information



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