

The Child & Youth Advocate

November 10, 2016



CYAC Pilot Project

(2011-2013)

- ✧ Advocate role was first introduced
- ✧ MDT approach to investigations but not co-located site
 - ✧ Attend child friendly location for the interview
 - ✧ Police, CAS & Advocate would meet a child-friendly location
 - ✧ SCAN & CYAC counsellor would consult via phone
- ✧ CYAC counsellor role created to provide immediate/short-term support
- ✧ MDT debrief following each case

CYAC Pilot Project

(2011-2013)

- ✧ There were two Advocates in the pilot project
- ✧ From April 2011 – March 2013, the Child & Youth Advocacy Program (CYAP) received:
 - ✧ 193 notifications of child abuse investigations
 - ✧ 119 families consented to services from the CYAP
- ✧ An example of positive caregiver feedback received in the survey during the pilot:

“Having the advocate explain what was going to happen and having them to go to for anything even when police and my worker was finished. I knew that I could still go to the advocate for support or if I had questions.”

Boost Child & Youth Advocacy Centre

The CYAC officially opened: **October 2013**

- ✧ Co-located model in a child friendly environment
- ✧ All MDT members are housed here – Police, CAS, Advocate, Counsellors, Medical
- ✧ In this model: 1 Advocate is assigned to each family
- ✧ Not all CYAC's have this model
- ✧ The CYAP is voluntary – receive informed consent to provide services
- ✧ Criminal charges and/or an open child protection file are not a requirement for advocacy services

Meet the Advocate



[Advocate Video](#)

The Advocate Provider

Immediate/ongoing support for children, youth and families who have experienced trauma and/or exposure to violence from the investigation until services are no longer required

- ✧ Needs assessment upon meeting the family
- ✧ Psycho-education & crisis support
- ✧ Regular/consistent contact with the family
- ✧ Referrals to supports & services (if required)
 - ✧ Counselling
 - ✧ Child/Victim Witness Support Program
 - ✧ Victim/Witness Assistance Program

The Advocate Role

The Boost CYAC Model has designated:
Advocates, CYAC counsellors, CVWSP workers

Other Agencies: the role and who fills those roles might be different

- ✧ A volunteer or police-based victim service worker may fill that role
- ✧ Family may not be assigned to a specific Advocate

Smaller community/agencies

- ✧ Limited resources
- ✧ Advocate may provide counselling
- ✧ Advocate may help child/youth prepare for court

The “Typical” Case

- ✧ Notification of a case by CYAP supervisor/MDT member
- ✧ Meet the family & orientate them to the centre
 - ✧ Do not discuss specifics surrounding the investigation
- ✧ Introduce the family to the Investigative Team
- ✧ Receive informed consent
 - ✧ Discuss services, the Advocate role & confidentiality

The “Typical” Case

Meet Youth Individually (following their interview)

- ✧ Discuss confidentiality & its limits
- ✧ Check-in
 - ✧ Symptom checklist
 - ✧ Suicide & self-harm

Meet Caregiver Individually (during the interview)

- ✧ Explanation of additional services & supports
- ✧ Provide Psycho-education
 - ✧ Common responses & reactions to trauma
 - ✧ Supportive Messaging

The “Typical” Case

If informed consent is received:

- ✧ Advocate facilitates introduction to CYAC counsellor if youth/caregiver requires immediate counselling support
- ✧ Following investigation, Advocate & MDT debrief and discuss next steps
- ✧ Advocate checks in with the family within 72 hours following the investigation, unless otherwise discussed
- ✧ Advocate facilitates referrals as recommended by MDT/requested by the family
- ✧ The Advocate may attend case reviews on the family’s behalf
- ✧ The Advocate will remain in contact with the family until services are complete and/or the family requests their file be closed

The “Typical” Case

After-hour Investigations & Investigations Outside the CYAC

- ✧ Advocates do not attend investigations outside of the CYAC (school, station, hospital) at any time
- ✧ If an Advocate is available, they may attend after-hours investigations at the CYAC
- ✧ When an Advocate is not present, the Investigative Team is provided with a CYAP folder (information sheet, brochure, consent forms & business card) for the family
- ✧ If verbal/written consent is obtained, the Advocate will contact the family within 72 hours following the interview to offer CYAP services
- ✧ If consent is not obtained, the Advocate will not contact the family

The “Typical” Case

CYAC Referrals (Internal)

The Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Program, Mental Health Consultant,
Assessment & Treatment Program (Boost),
Child Victim/Witness Support Program (Boost)

Community Referrals

Medical, Community Mental Health Agencies, Legal Assistance,
Victim/Witness Assistance Program, Public Assistance,
Housing Assistance, Immigration

Challenges

- ✧ Initial buy in from MDT – finding a place for the Advocate
- ✧ Role definition of Advocate & CYAC
- ✧ Follow-up cases vs. meeting at the investigation
- ✧ Balancing long-term cases & immediate investigations
- ✧ Flexibility: adapt to each case & varying needs of client(s)
 - ✧ Mental health concerns – varying responses to trauma
 - ✧ Limited information/information changes at the investigation
 - ✧ **Case study:** Information changes mid-investigation

Challeng

es Advocate Case Load

(April 2015- April 2016)

- ✧ **267** new families consented to CYAP Services
- ✧ **512** participants in the CYAP
- ✧ **70%** were seen at the CYAC
- ✧ **30%** follow-up cases: Advocate was assigned following off-site interviews
- ✧ At any given time, an Advocate carries a **25-35** family caseload
- ✧ Advocates have approx. **120** cases/year
- ✧ Case load – currently do not have a cap

Challenges

- ✧ **Balancing multiple clients from the same family/case**
 - ✧ Maintaining boundaries & confidentiality
 - ✧ Ex. parent consent vs. no consent from child/youth
- ✧ **Resources/funding challenges**
 - ✧ Inability to go above & beyond set expectations
- ✧ **Logistics: Multiple cases at the CYAC at the same time**
- ✧ **Space & Privacy for discussions**

Successes

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- ✧ MDT believes in this model, resulting in solid team relationships
- ✧ Colocation allows for dialogue/communication with the MDT
- ✧ Colocation has provided an opportunity to better understand each member's roles/responsibilities
 - ✧ Close working relationship with CAS/Police allowed for:
 - ✧ A new perspective on investigations: the benefit of the Advocate
 - ✧ A more considerate approach to investigations, to best meet the client's needs
 - ✧ **Case Study: Slip between the cracks**

Successes

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- ✧ **Feedback from families has been positive**
 - ✧ Clients feel they have been listened to
- ✧ **One neutral person, connecting with the family**
 - ✧ Communicates they have not been forgotten
- ✧ **Community relationships with different agencies: demonstrating an alternative approach to abuse investigations**
 - ✧ Beneficial for the community agencies & the CYAC
 - ✧ Realize how interconnected agencies/services are

Successes

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- ✧ If needed, Advocate's involvement allows for connection with services earlier than child/youth would otherwise be connected
 - ✧ Example: If the child/youth is anxious about the court process - connect them with CVWSP worker early
- ✧ Amount of contact the Advocate has with families
 - ✧ Allows MDT more time to focus on the investigation

Successes

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Advocacy Contact Stats

(Oct 1, 2015 – Oct 1, 2016)

- ✧ **304** new referrals were made to the Advocacy team
 - ✧ **1481** contacts with Families
 - ✧ **1039** contacts with MDT
- ✧ **982** contacts with community agencies
- ✧ **97** referrals made for Support Services

Successes

Safe Space & Time Spent with Advocate

- ✧ Helps client feel more comfortable to make a disclosure
- ✧ Without addressing specifics of the investigation, Advocate checks in: how client feels about being at the CYAC
- ✧ Advocate can inform the officer or child protection worker prior to the investigation of information/specific fears that would assist in development of rapport/support during the investigation
 - ✧ **Case Study: 80s Music**

Learning Outcomes

- ✧ CYAC counsellors meeting family at every investigation
 - ✧ Lack of resources
 - ✧ Difficult to coordinate
 - ✧ Too much for the family
- ✧ MDT debrief following investigations– helpful for MDT to be on the same page
 - ✧ Difficult: underestimated cases at CYAC & length of each investigation
 - ✧ Stopped MDT debrief & became Advocate responsibility to follow up with MDT
 - ✧ **Currently:** trying to get MDT together to debrief after each case

Learning Outcomes

- ✧ Cell phones/late nights
- ✧ Supervision in place for support
- ✧ Not knowing what time cases will end – connecting with supervisor when leaving agency
- ✧ Creating a crisis resource list, including Advocate hours, crisis lines & emergency information
 - ✧ Clients identify one informal support (family/friend)
 - ✧ Similar to a safety plan – phone safety plan
 - ✧ **Case Study:** Weekend phone call

Program Development

- ✧ Caregiver support: individual/group supports
- ✧ Specialized Advocates
 - ✧ Human Trafficking & school cases
 - ✧ **Case study:** Human Trafficking
- ✧ Suicide and self-harm screening
- ✧ Resource Worker position
- ✧ Developing a symptom checklist
 - ✧ Also used as referral information for CYAC counsellors

My Advocate



A “typical” case from a child’s perspective

[My Advocate](#)

Questions or Comments?



Thank you!

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