

The Child & Youth Advocacy Program (CYAP)



At
The CYAC@Boost

The Child & Youth Advocate

- The Advocate's role is to provide consistent support, advocacy and referral services to child/youth victims/witnesses of abuse and their families from the time of the initial investigation to completion of the criminal justice process (or when no further services are needed).
- The CYAP is a voluntary program and services are provided with consent from children/youth and/or non-offending family members/caregivers.
- Criminal Charges and/or verification by a child protection agency (or an open file) are not required to receive services.
- One Advocate is assigned to each family.

The Advocate (cont' d)

- The Advocate:
 - maintains regular contact with the child/family
 - liaises between the family and the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) members
 - provides ongoing referrals as required
 - participates in debriefs and case reviews, providing information and relevant updates
- The Advocate will close the file when the family requires no further services or at the direct request of the family.

Role Differentiation – CYAP/CAS

	Advocate	CYAC Child Protection Worker	Family or Child Service Worker
Part of the Investigative Team	No	Yes	Yes – in certain circumstances
Case Management Role	Yes, if CAS file is closed	Yes	Yes
Facilitate referrals	Yes	Yes – can delegate to Advocate	Yes – can delegate to Advocate
Maintain ongoing contact with family	Yes	Yes -until file is closed or assigned to an ongoing worker	Yes
Home visits	No	Yes	Yes

Role Differentiation – Services for Victims

	CYAP	CVWSP (Boost)	VWAP	Victim Services
Support/Advocacy at time of Investigation	Yes	No	No	Yes, but not for victims under the age of 16
Criminal charges required to provide services	No	Yes	Yes	No
Court preparation	No	Yes	Yes	No
Facilitation and assistance at Crown Meeting	No	Yes (in extenuating circumstances)	Yes	No
Court accompaniment	No	Yes	Yes	Yes (in extenuating circumstances)
Follow-up services (e.g., VIS, CICB applications)	No	Yes	Yes	No

Investigations at The CYAC@Boost

- The Advocacy Supervisor is notified of an impending investigation at the CYAC, and assigns an Advocate.
- The Investigative Team notifies the Advocate of the date and time of the investigation.
- Upon arrival at the CYAC, the Advocate:
 - greets the child/youth/family;
 - orients them to the center; and
 - establishes them in the waiting room/playroom.
- The Advocate will facilitate introductions of the Investigative Team to family members.

Investigations at the CYAC (cont' d)

- The Advocate will wait with and provide support to family members until all interviews are completed.
- During this time the Advocate will:
 - advise family members that the Advocate cannot discuss details of the abuse
 - review confidentiality and duty to report obligations
 - provide information about the CYAP and services available
 - obtain consents for service

Investigations at the CYAC (cont' d)

- Following the investigative interview(s), the Advocate will participate in the Debrief Meeting with the MDT.
- The Advocate will share questions/concerns raised by the family, and potential crisis/mental health concerns.
- Following the debrief, the Advocate will join the Investigative Team to meet with the family to provide information on the 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 Consultant and the family.

After Hours & Investigations Outside the CYAC

- The Advocate will not be available for after hours investigations, and will not attend investigations outside of the CYAC (school, station, hospital) that fall within regular business hours.
- The Advocate will provide the Investigative Team with a CYAP folder (information sheet, brochure, consent forms, business card) to be provided to the family during these investigations.
- If verbal or 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 have no contact with the family.

Ongoing Services

- Ongoing services will be provided to those children, youth and families/caregivers who have signed consents.
- The Advocate will contact the family within 72 hours following the initial investigation to check in and to provide potential updates.
- The Advocate will facilitate referrals as recommended by the MDT and requested by the family.
 - CYAC Internal Referrals: SCAN, Mental Health Consultant, Assessment & Treatment Program Child Victim Witness Support Program
 - Community Referrals: Medical, Community Mental Health Agencies, Victim Witness Assistance Program, Public Assistance, Legal Assistance, Housing Assistance, Immigration

Contact Timeline

- The National Children's Alliance (U.S.) recommends that ongoing and consistent support are routinely available for families.
- The following contact schedule was implemented as a guideline for the Pilot and will continue for the CYAC.
- The Advocate will contact families at a minimum:
 - within 72 hours after the initial investigation
 - once/month for the first 3 months
 - 6 months
 - 9 months
 - 1 year

How is the Advocate Beneficial to the MDT?

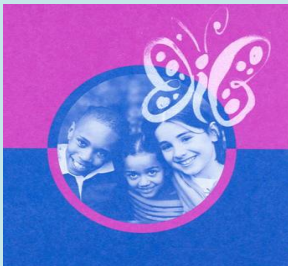
- The Advocate can maintain regular contact with the family and field questions and concerns previously directed toward the Investigative Team.
- The Advocate is able to share relevant updates and information to MDT members with respect to the family.
- The Advocate maintains an up-to-date list of community services and can expedite the referral process.



THE CYAC PILOT PROJECT

(April 2011-March 2013)

What We Learned



Thistletown
Regional Centre
SAFE-T Program



**THE OVERARCHING
THEME**

COMMUNICATION

The CYAP & The Pilot Project

- The CYAP was implemented as part of the Pilot Project.
- The goal was to pilot the Advocate position and determine the effectiveness of this role for families and the MDT.
- The CYAP received **195 notifications** of child abuse investigations; **111 families consented** to CYAP services.
- Advocates were not present for investigations outside of The Gatehouse.

Stats on the 195 Pilot Cases

Location of Investigation	# of Cases	Consent to CYAP	Charges Laid	Charges Not laid	Unknown
School	53	23%	13%	77%	10%
Police Station	25	60%	56%	44%	0
Child -Friendly Facility (Gatehouse)	99	82%	35%	62%	0
Hospital	11	27%	18%	45%	37%
Home	6	0	0	67%	34%
Hotel	1	0	0	100%	0

Stats (cont' d)

- When an investigation took place at a school, 23% consented to the CYAP, and the file remained open for an average of 2 months (whether or not charges were laid).
- However, minimal direct service was provided due to difficulties contacting families.
- When an investigation took place at The Gatehouse and an Advocate was present, 82% of families consented to services, and received an average of 7.5 months of direct service.
 - Longer involvement when charges are laid
 - Open door policy for families that wish to return
- Clearly the Advocate's ability to immediately meet/connect with the family facilitates consents for ongoing services.

Advocates' Contacts (111 families)

Type of Contact (includes email, phone, follow-up meetings)	Total #
Caregiver/youth	880
Police	262
Child Protection	338
SCAN (medical)	106
SAFE-T (Mental Health)	199
Community Service Providers	144
Total:	1,929 contacts
Debriefs with MDT	97
Referrals for Clients	92

Parent/Caregiver Feedback – Key Findings

- Feedback from families around the role of the Advocate and the level of ongoing support provided was described as excellent or good.
- Parents/caregivers felt:
 - listened to
 - that they and their children were treated with respect
 - that the surroundings were youth friendly
 - safe while interviewed
 - that their telephone calls were returned promptly

Parent/Caregiver Feedback (cont' d)

“Boost staff was with me consistently and she made me feel safe and comfortable and her support continued for months afterwards. Without her ‘filling in the gaps’ for me, I wouldn’t of known where to turn or what my next steps should be. Many, many thanks from the children and me!!!”

“...let me know that this was a trial (pilot). I hope that it continues because it was very well coordinated and I am happy that everyone was working together.”

“I can’t believe this is a new program, what did families do before! I felt like I could go to her with anything. I could go to her with any question because I didn’t always know who to ask. Sometimes she called to just see how we were doing and that made us feel important.”

IMPORTANCE OF THE ADVOCATE

- Pilot participants felt that the Advocate role was very important/critical and made a significant difference to the system and children and families.
- The number of the caregivers who received support was “unbelievable.”
- The connection the Advocate has with families helped to reduce the anxiety.
- It was stressed that having a neutral support was beneficial to both the child and the family, and the presence of this support early on made the experience more unified.

Importance of the Advocate (cont'd)

- The Advocate was a positive addition, assisting the family (child, non-offending parent and at times offending parent) from initial investigation with resources, navigating the court system and other issues that needed to be addressed (e.g., trauma).
- This pilot project made a huge difference in people's lives by providing families with information, support and a main contact person so they do not have to be "shuffled around to different people."
- The Advocate offers better, specialized service to the victim, and was instrumental by having one person to communicate with and book referrals through.

Importance of the Advocate (cont'd)

- There was positive communication between the Advocate and all MDT members throughout the Pilot.
- The Advocates ongoing contact with the family allowed MDT members more time to focus on their own roles and responsibilities.
- The Advocate improves police efficiency by taking a large portion of work which would normally be left to the officer (i.e., speaking with victims on the phone), which enables officers to focus on [core] police work, rather than the social/emotional piece (“victim management”).

“Now we can all go home confident that the victim is getting the best care, beyond what our abilities are – a lot of officers are not aware of services, but specialized people know, and we can move on to the next case knowing this one is being taken care of – it’s a big relief.”

Importance of the Advocate (cont'd)

- Confidence that the victims were receiving appropriate services (improved outcomes for victims receiving services).

“You need to look at how much time the Advocates are spending dealing with the victims, and then that’s how much time we (the police) are saving.”

“The Advocate does the resource piece, we can do other pieces... The Advocate is a neutral person...the family may have a history with the agency and police and having a neutral person to help through the process...allows for a unified response with CAS and police.”

“They help the family member to navigate through the system...with intricacies of court and with trauma stuff...the Advocate will hang in for other stuff...they don’t drop the case cold.”

Importance of the Advocate (cont'd)

“If the system works, you make the referral, and you don’t hear back, and if it didn’t work, the person would call back and then you know the system doesn’t work – we are not getting those calls now.”

“Before, we assumed that people were getting services once we referred them on – some people didn’t, and they slipped through the cracks. Now it would be very tough to slip through the cracks.”

- It would have been helpful to have done a focus group(s) earlier, which would have given time to reflect.

MOVING FORWARD

❖ Clarification is needed with respect to:

- the types of cases that will be coming through the CYAC and the role of the Advocate (e.g., parental conflict).
- the involvement of the Advocate in debriefs for cases outside the CYAC (e.g., school).
- the Advocate's role with the family at the CYAC when there is an apprehension (including when investigators have a sense that there is going to be an apprehension at the CYAC).

Moving Forward (cont'd)

- ❖ Further clarify the specific roles of the Advocate and Mental Health Clinician, including:
 - who implements the screening tools (suicide/self-harm; trauma)?
 - Who is responsible for contacting the Mental Health Clinician if the investigation is outside of the CYAC?
 - if ongoing mental health referrals are facilitated by the MH Clinician or the Advocate?

Moving Forward (cont'd)

❖ Additional tasks for the CYAP:

- creation of a *Caregiver Guide*
- creation of a *Youth Guide*
- completion of the *Child & Youth Advocacy Program Manual*
- Revise the CYAP forms/letters (e.g., intake form, end of service letter)
- determine specific documentation to be kept
- assist with the development of the Caregiver Support Program

Final words of wisdom from the
Pilot Participants:

**“Supporting each other in the process
is the key to success.”**

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