

HALIFAX

Youth Advocate Program

Presentation Overview

- Program Description/Background
- Defining Youth at Risk/Risk Factors
- Working Together/Wrap Around
- How To Make a Referral

Background

In 2007, HRM was awarded 1.9 million dollars by the National Crime Prevention Centre to operate a 4 year pilot program called the “Youth Advocate Program”. Due to the success of the program and the work of the Youth Advocate Workers, in 2012 the Municipality took on funding costs to operate the Youth Advocate Program. The Youth Advocate Program is now a core service of the Municipality. In 2018, Halifax Regional Council approved the expansion of YAP into Cole Harbor, North Preston & Sackville.

Program Description

The Program Purpose

- A community based intervention program for Youth 9-15 yrs who are at-risk of or who are engaging in anti-social and criminal behaviors.
- YAP serves 14 communities in HRM.
- Ensure youth and/or family members identify & access the services they require.
- Focus on improving coordination and delivery of existing services.
- Our aim is to increase the youth and parents ability to make better choices by celebrating successes, building up self reliance, resiliency, pro-social skills and by engaging them in constructive behaviours with family, school and community.

Program Description

What We Do...

- Actively involve parents and youth in all decisions and ensure family lead process
- Each Youth Advocate Worker can work with up to 5 youth/Families at a time
- Youth & families may stay in the program as long as needed (18 month internal timeline), files are reviewed at 6 month intervals to assess risk and monitor active case plans
- Facilitate /mediate discussions when challenges/successes occur between youth and service providers

Defining Youth at Risk

- The youth we work with may present a number of risk factors, our goal is to intervene to wrap services and supports around the youth and family. We want to build up layers of support and mitigate risk factors while enhancing and increasing protective factors.

Defining Youth At Risk - YAP Risk Factors

- ✓ Drug trafficking
- ✓ Frequent involvement with police – high involvement in criminal activity
- ✓ Gang Related Activity
- ✓ High commitment to friends who get into trouble
- ✓ Friends / Family members who are involved in criminal activity
- ✓ Problems between home/school cultures
- ✓ Lack of adult and parental role models, parents involved in crime, parents with violent attitudes, brothers/sisters with anti-social behaviours

Bill C-24 - Criminal Organization Definition

A Criminal Organization means:

1. A group, however organized, that is composed of three or more persons and;
2. That has as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offences;
3. That, if committed, would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including a financial benefit, by the group or by any one of the persons who constitute the group. It *does not* include a group of persons that form randomly for the immediate commission of a single offence

***Source** - Department of Justice resource guide on youth gangs

Services in a Snap Shot

We understand every youth, family and community that we work with is different and unique. That is why we are always growing our roster of support to intimately match the unique challenges and barriers our youth and families may be facing.

Therapy – Through our growing roster of private therapists we provide therapeutic and mental health support to youth and their families where a need is expressed and or recognized.

Academic Support – We understand with the challenges youth and families may be facing, academic endeavours may pose challenges. We have an increasing amount of support through private tutors and organizations to provide academic support to our youth and families.

Services in a Snap Shot cont'd

Transportation – Eliminating barriers so that youth and families can flourish and be successful is what we try to do at YAP. Used as incentives, support or a shared service we provide bus tickets, taxi chits and transportation support for our youth and families.

Admission & access – Through collaborative efforts & partnerships, we help to reduce barriers to access and admission to leisure activities and events.

Coaching & mentoring – Our staff have an abundance of lived experience and professional experience. Through youth or family lead conversations, guidance, coaching and mentoring happen often.

*Referrals to other services and supports as needed – We refer to other organizations, services and or supports as deemed necessary by the family or recognized by the YAW.

Youth Advocate Worker in Action

- Daily check-in with youth and family in person or over the phone (guidance, coaching, mentoring)
- Case management with Police, School, DCS, Justice, Family, etc.
- Celebrate successes/Intervene when things aren't going well
- Facilitate access to resources and program/supports/information
- Participate with/accompany/spend time with youth
- Plan, implement, monitor plans/strategies with youth and family
- Advocate for programs and services for the youth
- Partner with other organizations to better support the youth/family
- Intervene during crisis
- Attend a court hearing with youth and family
- Visit youth in jail/detention center

Youth Advocate Program Communities

- Mulgrave Park/Uniacke Square
- Spryfield
- Bayer's Westwood/Fairview/Clayton Park
- North Dartmouth
- East Dartmouth
- Gaston Road/Woodside
- Sackville (Lower-Mid)
- Cole Harbor
- North Preston
- East Preston

Defining Youth at Risk

How Life May Be Characterized

- Substandard/public housing
- No bed or room to sleep
- No food, clean clothes
- Abused/bullied
- Substance abuse
- Underlying/undiagnosed mental health concerns
- Disruptive presence in school & community
- Chaotic home
- Dysfunctional family
- Single parent/ guardian homes
- Under/unemployed parent
- No support network
- Involved in crime/violence
- Few positive adult role models

The Relationship Approach

- Building rapport is integral to propelling positive momentum forward.
- The Family is the primary area of work and building on the youth and family strengths is a main focus of the intervention.
- YAP will focus on multiple determinants of criminal and anti-social behaviour, and will provide access to services for the youth and family.
- Interventions focus on the multitude of factors influencing anti-social behaviour.

Involving Family in Wrap Around The Family Directs the Plan

- Identifying their unique strengths and needs.
- Creating a Youth Support Team made up of people who have the youth & families best interests in mind.
- Developing a personal action plan to meet the Youth/Family's needs (Revise when needed).
- Developing a personal crisis or safety plan (if needed).
- The plans developed are flexible and unique to each youth and their family.

Trends

- Large portion of youth issues stems from youths at home situation
- Majority of our referrals come from schools
- A lot of youth on our caseload reside in a single parent household. Often the parent is always a female.
- Consistency has shown to be a determining factor in change
- Youth often commit crimes out of necessity (no money, no food, survival)
- External Trauma plays a significant role in the mental well-being of the youth and families.

Assessments

- Assessment's are completed by our Youth advocate Program Assistant Tahirah Smith.
- Measures resiliency, commitment to criminal activity, school behavior etc
- Assessments are done with the “PMK” and the youth each time
- Developed over 10 years by Dalhousie's Resiliency Research Centre
- Completed prior to program acceptance and carried out every 6 months while youth is in the program

Youth Advocate Program - Results Assessment

File Number: [REDACTED]	ACCEPTED/ NOT ACCEPTED	Initial		PMK		6- month		1 Year		18 Months	
		Date: [REDACTED]	Date: [REDACTED]	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:				
Section	Range of Scores	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk
Resilience & Coping	High Score = Low Risk										
The Child & Youth Resilience Measure <i>(individual, relationships, culture and resources)</i>	< 44 Very Low resilience; 44 to 48 Low Resilience; 49 to 53 Medium Resilience; > 54 High Resilience	36	Very High Risk	29	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk
SDQ Pro Social Behaviour <i>(youth engagement in pro-social behaviour)</i>	0-4 Abnormally Low Levels of PSB; 5 Borderline Levels of PSB; 6-10 Normal Levels of PSB	9	Low Risk	9	Low Risk	0	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk
Self-Esteem <i>(reflects a youth's sense of self-worth)</i>	1-2 Low Self-Worth; 2.1-2.9 Moderate Self-Worth; 3-4 High Self-Worth										
Family Relationship Characteristics - Cohesion Sub-Scale	1-2 Low Cohesion; 2.1-2.9 Moderate Cohesion; 3-4 High Cohesion	2.3	High Risk	2.4	High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk
Attachment to School	1-2.4 Low Attachment; 2.5-3.5 Moderate Attachment; 3.6-5 High Attachment	3.3	High Risk	3.8	Low Risk	0.0	Very High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk
Attachment to Teacher - RYD Scale	1-2 Low Teacher Attachment; 2.1-2.9 Moderate Teacher Attach; 3-4 High Teacher Attachment	3.0	Low Risk	2.8	High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk	0.0	Very High Risk
Attachment to Community <i>(version B only)</i>	YAPST YAPST-PMK 3-8 Low Com Attach; 1-5; 9-14 Moderate Attach; 6-10; 15-20 Low Com Attach; 11-14	12	High Risk	4	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk	0	Very High Risk
Risk Level	High Score = High Risk	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk	Y Score	Y Risk

Referral Process

Referral Form received at the office (date stamped)



YAPA sends confirmation email or calls person making referral acknowledging receipt of referral



Within 5 business days YAPA contacts Guardian/Parent to schedule/complete an introductory appointment and to discuss the program

Assessment scheduled for parent/guardian and youth



Youth accepted into program



Youth put on wait list

or

Youth referred to another service
(Phoenix, IWK, YouthLive, SchoolsPlus, Family SOS)

How To Make a Referral

Anyone can refer youth to the Youth Advocate Program, provided the parent or guardian agrees once referral is received. Referral forms can be downloaded off of our website or we can mail or fax one to you.

Our Website - <http://www.halifax.ca/yap>