Collaborative Problem Solving: Final Outcomes Report
PDAG-1137 Group Professional Development Award

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Executive Summary

The Ottawa community was provided an opportunity, by the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, to be trained at the Collaborative Problem Solving Institute in Boston in August 2009. This training resulted in the 5 organizations using a consistent and similar approach to treatment and case review, when providing services to their respective clients/patients. In particular, Crossroads Children’s Centre, Youth Services Bureau, Roberts/Smart Centre, Coordinated Access and the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario had begun to implement this model within their organization following a grant from the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health in 2008. This second grant opportunity resulted in further developing the Community of Practice in Ottawa specific to the evidence informed approach known as Collaborative Problem Solving.

Collaborative Problem Solving

The Collaborative Problem Solving model sets forth two major tenets: first, that social, emotional, and behavioral challenges in children/youth are best understood as the byproduct of lagging cognitive skills (rather than, for example, as attention-seeking, manipulative, limit-testing, or a sign of poor motivation); and second, that these challenges are best addressed by resolving the problems that are setting the stage for challenging behavior in a collaborative manner (rather than through reward and punishment programs and intensive imposition of adult will)\(^1\). Using this model for review of cases and the provision of treatment marks a major shift across each organization in terms of our typical approach to providing treatment services.

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\(^1\) Ross Greene, http://www.explosivechild.com/cpssentials/index.html
Stated Goals and Objectives

1. The proposed group training will enhance the capacity of the Ottawa community to work in partnership and in a consistent manner in an effort to plan and provide services for the consumers of children’s mental health in this region.

A partnership of the original 5 organizations has been firmly developed and includes a weekly meeting with Dr. Stuart Ablon Think:Kids at Massachusetts General Hospital. As well, the partnership has expanded recently to include; Christie Lake Camp, Cornwall Hospital, Ottawa District School Board, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Eastern Ontario Young Offenders and in the near future University of Ottawa Faculty of Education.

2. Each organization sending a representative to this training opportunity will be able to work with their respective organization to train their teams in the use of the Collaborative Problem Solving Approach and to provide direct supervision of the staff within their organizations.

All 7 participants in the Level II training are now considered coaches in terms of providing supervision within their respective organizations and also within the Community of Practice. Dr. Ablon, continues to provide each participant with guidance related to supervision within the CPS model. In Ottawa there is the capacity to provide ongoing training and supervision directly as a result of this award.

3. As well, each organization will have the capacity to consult and learn further from weekly training provided by the Think:Kids.

We have had the opportunity to participate in video/teleconferencing weekly over the past several months with Dr. Stuart Ablon. This has helped each organization implement and maintain this evidence informed practice in their respective organizations.

Knowledge Exchange

A great deal of knowledge exchange related to this evidence informed practice and the Ottawa Community of Practice has occurred over the past year. In particular, a newsletter has been developed to keep interest and developments front and centre for the Ottawa community. This newsletter has been provided to all of the participants in the CoP and has been sent to a number of organizations that we have trained over the past two years.

This approach has been outlined in detail for approximately 3000 teaching staff through the Student Success and Leadership Initiative (SSLI), and to 3rd year students at Algonquin College in the Child and Youth Worker Program and is now part of the program’s curriculum. Moreover, training has been provided through Children’s Mental Health Ontario via Webinar by Michael Hone and Dr. Stuart Ablon.
In the Ottawa community the following organizations have all had participated in either certification training or in 1 day workshops related to CPS;

Lowertown Community Resource Centre, Crossroads Children’s Centre, Robert/Smart Centre, Youth Services Bureau, Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario, Ottawa Catholic and Public School Board, Centre Psycho-Sociale, Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa, Youville Centre, Rideauwood, Eastern Ontario Young Offender Services, St. Mary’s Home, Whitby Regional Hospital, Sudbury Regional Hospital and Timmin’s Child and Family Services.

We are hopeful that we can continue to spread knowledge as it relates to this evidence informed practice, through opportunities at conferences’ such as the Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO, at United Way Ottawa events and in response to other training requests that occur through our involvement with Children’s Mental Health Ontario.

**Conclusion**

The training opportunity has enabled the Ottawa service providers involved in the grant an opportunity to create a Community of Practice (CoP). This CoP has proven to make services more consistent across organizations and has allowed the partners to work together in ensuring more smooth and seamless transitions between organizations. As well, participants are reviewing cases using common language and are better equipping clients with skills they will require in the future. As a direct result of the opportunity our community now has full capacity to continue implementing this approach through a wide variety of services to better meet the population’s needs. Our next phase will be to formally evaluate the impact that the philosophical changes have had directly with clients receiving services through this CoP.