



Aisling Discoveries
Child and Family Centre

HELPING HANDS
PROGRAM EVALUATION RESULTS

AISLING DISCOVERIES CHILD & FAMILY CENTRE

For the Period of April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research and Evaluation Department
January 2013

HELPING HANDS PROGRAM EVALUATION RESULTS APRIL 1, 2010 TO MARCH 31, 2012

The *Helping Hands* program addresses the needs of children and their families living in the five shelters for homeless families in the Scarborough community of Toronto. The families served are in a state of flux, coping with multiple stressors and due to this, are often unable to access community supports that may be available to assist them in parenting their children. Many of the women have fled domestic violence and the children often exhibit behavioural difficulties that the parents struggle to handle.

Children's stressors related to being homeless include lack of privacy and freedom, rules of the shelter, and uncertainty about the future. In addition, because they often are required to change schools, these children are deprived of protective factors such as friendships and successful school performance, and may have lower self-esteem.

Aisling Discoveries Child and Family Centre helps those who cannot register for mental health programs to access these vital services by bringing services directly to the children, families, teachers and shelter staff. The services offered by *Helping Hands* fall into three major categories: Brief Family Counselling, Workshops/Groups, and Consultation/Training for Staff.

The goals of *Helping Hands* include: assisting parents and their children to develop coping strategies that will enable them to have a better future, academic and otherwise; enabling children to function more effectively at school; increasing parental involvement in their children's school careers; and educating teachers and parents about how to better help the children succeed.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of the *Helping Hands* program examined the opinions of those who participated from April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2012. During this period, a total of 1723 clients were served by the program, including 917 children, 240 staff and 566 parents. When appropriate, adult and child participants were asked to provide feedback or complete a survey at the end of the groups, presentations, workshops, or individual consultations.

Only a sample of the results will be reported on below.

BRIEF FAMILY COUNSELLING/CONSULTATION

A social worker is available on a regular basis at the shelter to offer individual counselling sessions to parents and children to deal with the social, emotional and behavioural issues related to their circumstances. *Brief Family Counselling* assists parents in managing their present situation and provides support, resources and strategies to improve their current experience. Families are referred to *Brief Family Counselling* by shelter staff, but families come voluntarily.

Results

A total of 373 hours of brief counselling/consultation was provided to as many as 240 families and 50 staff. As families may be seen one week and the next week they have left the shelter, it has been challenging to conduct an evaluation of this aspect of the Helping Hands project. Appointments are short, and clients' lives are very chaotic, so we have not asked clients for any formal feedback. However, shelter staff members at three shelters who provide referrals for *Brief*

Counselling were asked to complete a short survey to provide feedback about the *Brief Counselling* service.

Table 1: Staff survey responses for *Brief Counselling*

A. SERVICE		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I understand the purpose of brief counseling	83%	17%	0%	0%
2.	I believe the service is a valuable resource for families at the shelter	100%	0%	0%	0%
3.	Brief counseling service assists me in doing my job	50%	50%	0%	0%
4.	I make regular referrals to the program	60%	40%	0%	0%
5.	I would recommend this service to the families I work with	100%	0%	0%	0%
6.	I follow up with clients with regards to their experience with brief counseling	33%	67%	0%	0%
B. OVERALL RATING		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I believe the service should continue at the shelter	100%	0%	0%	0%

Shelter staff were also asked to share any feedback they had received from families about the *Brief Counselling* service. All had heard that families found the sessions helpful and they wanted to see the therapist again. Their comments include:

“Consistent feedback is that families were grateful for the opportunity to meet with [the therapist] and felt they benefitted from having met with her. Thank you!”

“Some moms have mentioned that they were given great suggestions on dealing with their children.”

“Other residents who have heard about the brief therapy but have not attended in the past are now asking to meet with [the therapist]. Thank you.”

“Mothers have asked for on-going appointments and have disclosed that the sessions are very helpful with helping them deal with specific issues.”

WORKSHOPS/GROUPS FOR CHILDREN

Many children stated that they learned about different types of bullying, how to be a good friend, and how to be nice and listen to others. Children also learned techniques to avoid being a victim of a bully and learned strategies to deal with bullying.

ROOTS OF EMPATHY

The *Roots of Empathy* program is an evidence-based program that aims to build social and emotional capacity in children from kindergarten to grade eight. A neighbourhood infant and parent visit the classroom every three weeks. A trained *Roots of Empathy* instructor coaches students to observe the baby’s development and to label the baby’s feelings. Children learn to identify the emotions of a baby, and in turn, learn to identify both their own feelings and the feelings of others. The program takes place in a classroom in 27 sessions over the school year. Surveys were offered at the end of one *Roots of Empathy* workshop to the child attendees. Surveys were completed by 24 children.

Table 2: *Roots of Empathy* survey responses

	Yes	No	Not sure
I learned how to recognize my own feelings.	83%	0%	17%
I learned how to talk about my feelings	70%	13%	17%
I understand how other people feel.	88%	0%	13%
I am more aware of bullying (including people being called names, people being left out or made fun of).	79%	8%	13%
I feel sad or upset when I see someone being picked on or treated meanly.	73%	0%	27%
I learned that it hurts other people's feelings when they are bullied.	92%	4%	4%
I learned that bullying is not ok.	92%	4%	4%
I learned that everybody has feelings.	92%	4%	4%
I learned that it is not ok to hurt someone's feelings just because I'm feeling angry, sad, or scared.	75%	4%	21%
I learned that babies' brains grow better when they are loved and cared for.	88%	4%	8%
I learned that if a pregnant woman smokes or drinks, she could harm her baby.	92%	4%	4%
I learned that it is dangerous to shake a baby.	96%	0%	4%
I learned that being a parent and caring for a baby is a lot of hard work.	88%	8%	4%
I think that other children would like having ROE in their class.	88%	4%	8%

What can ROE (*Roots of Empathy*) teach the world?

The children were asked to explain what they felt *Roots of Empathy* could teach the world. The children indicated that the program could teach people about empathy and about not being a bully. The children also felt that the program could teach the world about babies.

“It can teach the world how to not bully, what harms a baby and learning about babies. Stand up for bullying and showing empathy. Having feelings for other people.”

“Roe can teach the world that everyone is equal and should have empathy. Roe can: also teach the world how to treat, act, listen, and learn to read babies and people's feelings.”

“Roots of Empathy can teach the world that everyone has feelings, and that you always need to understand how it feels to be in some elses shoes. ROE will teach the world things that you could never thought of, such as SIDS, or that Babies Need love to grow and learn. It also Boosts up your self-esteem.”

WORKSHOPS/GROUPS FOR PARENTS

Parents learned how to better understand and respond to their child’s emotions. They also learned more about communicating and listening to their child. In addition, parents learned the importance of health and healthy eating, and setting and keeping a routine.

Feedback provided by the participants was overwhelmingly positive; the vast majority of those served by *Helping Hands* felt that the workshops were very helpful, and that they would definitely be able to use some of the strategies that they learned.

POWER OF POSITIVE PARENTING

Surveys were offered to a total of 19 parents who attended the *Triple P- Power of Positive Parenting* workshop. The evaluation form was completed by 14 parents.

Table 3: *Power of Positive Parenting* survey responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I learned new information from this presentation.	7%	0%	0%	64%	29%
I understand the 5 parenting principles that help manage my child's behaviour.	7%	0%	0%	79%	14%
I will be able to use the skills that were taught.	7%	0%	7%	50%	36%
The presenter clearly explained the information.	7%	0%	0%	36%	57%
I would recommend this presentation to others.	7%	0%	0%	29%	64%

Please tell us the most helpful thing you learned here

Parent responses varied as to what was most helpful for them.

"How to teach a child a positive behaviour"

"Predictable routines- key."

"Quiet time strategy"

RAISING RESILIENT CHILDREN

Results

Evaluations were completed by 10 parent attendees of the *Raising Resilient Children* workshop.

Table 4: *Raising Resilient Children* survey responses

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
I acquired new knowledge/skills from this presentation.	0%	0%	0%	10%	90%
I learned 6 Building Blocks that help children develop strategies for dealing with their feelings and coping with life stresses.	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%
I will be able to apply/use the new knowledge/skills that were taught.	0%	0%	0%	30%	70%
The presenter clearly explained the information.	0%	0%	0%	20%	80%
I would recommend this presentation to others.	0%	0%	0%	30%	70%

Please tell us the most useful thing you learned here

The responses given from the parents were varied when they were asked about the most useful thing that they learned.

"Talking w/ your child, letting them make choices also, listen to your children"

"We learned about children emotional & their feeling"

"Learn tool and the presenter explaining the materials"

TRAINING FOR SHELTER STAFF/TEACHERS

Shelter staff learned strategies to better communicate with parents, to help the client to have a voice, and to increase parental involvement. Staff also reported that the motivational strategies and reframing/rephrasing techniques that they learned were most useful to them.

IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON MOTHERS

The *Impact of Domestic Violence on Mothers* workshop provides information to shelter staff to help them better support mothers who have been exposed to domestic violence. The presentation also increases awareness of staff members of the impact of domestic violence on children.

Results

Surveys were offered at the end of the Impact of Domestic Violence on Mothers workshop and were completed by 13 staff members.

Table 5: *Impact of Domestic Violence on Mothers* survey responses

How helpful was the workshop?			Are you able to use some of the ideas after the workshop?		
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Somewhat helpful</i>	<i>Very helpful</i>	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>I might be able to</i>	<i>I definitely will</i>
0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%

Please specify what ideas are most useful for you

When asked to specify what ideas were most useful, many of the staff members mentioned confidentiality, the power and abuse wheel, and how to advocate for clients. They also found ideas about properly listening to mothers during abuse disclosure to be helpful.

"Everything - working with the clients we serve- from advocacy to listening to abuse disclosure, and confirming what I do correctly and incorrect as a worker."

"Reviewing confidentiality + how to maintain a clients sense of safety."

"Behaviour, body language, power and control wheel."