

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SEPTEMBER 23 2015

(This report covers the period from August 1 2014 to July 31 2015)

Preamble:

As our work continues to gain recognition both provincially and nationally we find ourselves still caught in a holding pattern as limited resources continue to prevent us from expanding and reaching out to a larger clientele base. We have 2.8 FTE counselling therapists, specialists in the field of family violence, to provide counselling services to a population of 450,000. In May this year, we had to close intake to probation clients due to the waitlist and are only able to offer them, effective September 2015, group counselling. Presentations have been made to our major funding source, the Department of Community Services, and we are still waiting to hear the outcome of those efforts to secure more sustainable funding. We are looking for additional funding that would provide more staff to address the wait time for families involved with Child Protection Services. However, our social enterprise of fee for service has helped considerably to keep the lights on. Overall, we have had a very successful year in strengthening and growing our professional credibility as indicated in the following outcomes:

Staff updates:

We have enjoyed a year of consistent staffing stability and only just recently had to say 'goodbye' to Carole Sandy who has returned to be closer to family in Montreal. Her vacancy has been absorbed by Stephanie Wells. All staff bring a unique set of skills, experiences and dynamics to their practice and we are fortunate to have such a diverse complement of staff demonstrating excellence in their field. Jane Donovan, Clinical Supervisor, along with Tod Augusta Scott, travelled to Haida Gwaii to train that community in the work we do in men's groups. She also presented her work at the National Domestic Violence Conference in Toronto. Eric Ross presented his work at the CCPA National Conference in Niagara Falls and continues to pursue advanced training in using music in psychotherapy. Stephanie Wells brings in to her practice the use of art therapy and is beginning to do this work with children of New Start clients.

Program updates:

We have found that Yoga has been especially helpful to clients who have experienced post traumatic stress and we have had the services of Yoga Instructor, Denise Landry, to conduct these sessions. During the year Denise held two yoga programs with a third to take place in the fall of 2015. Two men's counselling groups have been held this year and two women's groups. Funding for the women's programs came from the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation, the HRP Crime Prevention Association and the Rotary Club of Dartmouth East. The Journey Man program was completed in the fall of 2014. We are in the process of completing the poster campaign.

Statistics:

The new data base is providing some interesting statistics. During this reporting period we provided 4,323 hours of counselling:

Conjoint	57
Group (men)	941
Group (other)	126
Individual	3209
TOTAL	4323

There were 294 referrals with a mean average age of 39 years with a range from 19 to 74 years of age. The majority of referrals came from probation services even though referrals from probation were curtailed in May 2015. The second highest referral source came from Child Protection Services. We had 149 referrals to the women's program.

The 'no show' rate has been calculated at 7.6% which means that for every 13 clients we see, one decides to 'no show'.

Professional Development for staff:

Staff have been invited to attend several DCS sponsored training opportunities. Staff attended a two day training with Laurie Haskell on trauma informed practice; the December 6th Day of Remembrance with Lana Wells as a keynote (New Start staff also presented at this event); Domestic Violence Educators Training; and a two day Train the Trainer for practitioners to deliver workshops to Boys and Men about preventing sexual assault. For the first time this year, staff planned and developed a one day professional development day (in-service) to share with each other their particular interest in practice issues. All staff are regulated through their respective regulatory bodies and have completed the required PD credits for ongoing licensure.

Community connections:

This year we had several good meetings with colleagues in the field. We had a meeting with Alice Housing to share our work and listen to some of their plans. We have been invited by Alice Housing to get together to see if we can share some resources related to working with children who have been impacted by family violence. We have made presentations to the Halifax Regional Police, Probation Services, and the Department of Community Services and responded to community agencies for information about New Start. New Start continues to be an active member of the Metro Inter Agency on Family Violence and the High Risk Protocol Committee. New Start was invited to participate, along with other service providers, in the review of amendments to the Children and Family Services Act conducted by the Department of Community Services. As the Department of Community Services is reviewing and transforming its operational structure, we have been advised that we need to be prepared to enter into

a service agreement with the department. The Department of Community Services will be looking for specific outcomes of our service to ensure that they meet the mandate of DCS for future funding.

Concluding comments:

We have continued to build on the previous three years' transformation and feel confident that we are moving forward towards a vibrant and creative vision as to our scope of practice. The engagement of all family members, when appropriate, is beginning to prove helpful to clients and their feedback is encouraging to us. There is still potential to develop our work to reach out and touch pockets and corners of community where family violence is still a closely guarded secret. Working with our partners whether they are government or community is an ongoing work in progress and overtime there will be full recognition that working with those who commit acts of family violence is meaningful and important work.

It is good that New Start is often contacted by media to provide an opinion or commentary on family violence and it is good that the Department of Community Services has heard our call for additional resources. We were recently interviewed by Ian Brown of the Globe and Mail for a Focus article. What is not good, is that, in 2015, family violence is not seen as a priority by all levels of government and the community at large and that we shall continue to band aid a social issue that has far reaching consequences for society if we do not act now in a responsive, preventative way. The economic costs of not acting now will fail Nova Scotians in the future.

As a social worker it has been a privilege to work with such professional staff and I would like to acknowledge their contribution to the elimination of family violence. They work passionately and tirelessly to help people find ways to live a peaceful life and need to be commended in bringing their skills, expertise and love for the work to work each day. Thank you.

New Start is blessed with a Board of Directors who mirrors this passion and dedication to the eradication of family violence and I thank all of them for their support to me, and through me to the staff and clients.

Wendy Keen MSW RSW,
Executive Director,
September 2015.