

Report to the Community

PEEL CHILDREN'S AID

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

WINTER 2007

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Children enjoying winter weather activities thanks to donations from our community: winter boots from Columbia Sportswear Company; gently used winter jackets from West 49; hats, mitts and scarves from the Salvation Army. More donors listed on the back page.

DIFFERENTIAL RESPONSE: Changing how we work with families

Peel Children's Aid recognizes the value in engaging families to change parenting practices and better protect their children. "We are moving toward a more family assessment-oriented approach in response to reports of child neglect and abuse," says Director of Intake Services Joycelet Brown.

Brown says that in Ontario, the child welfare field as a whole has grown in appreciation of the importance of engaging parents, involving extended family networks in protecting children, building on the strengths and motivation of parents to do a better job, and recognizing the enormous challenges many families face in sustaining healthy lives.

In February, Peel Children's Aid is piloting a "differential response" approach to how it responds to calls about child protection. Differential Response is a method of service delivery where children and families receive different 'streams' of service based on the type and severity of child maltreatment and the needs of the family. If there is evidence of abuse, a traditional approach would be used, and for less urgent cases a more collaborative approach focusing on engaging the family in services would be utilized.

Peel Children's Aid has always looked to the strengths in their families, but as a result of province-wide changes initiated by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, families that become involved with Peel Children's Aid will be more involved in decision making.

"Families will be consulted as to what they think will work better for them in ensuring children are safe and well cared for," says Brown.

"This is a more respectful process," Brown explains. "We're now looking at families' strengths and consulting with whoever is involved in the family's life and supportive of them to provide a stable home for their children. This includes other family members and agencies in the community. The approach will be child-focused and based on collaboration."

Brown believes this approach will minimize the risk of families being referred to Peel Children's Aid again. "Families will be part of developing their plan, which will engage them more effectively, while we continue to focus on reducing risk."

"We're looking at families case by case and we think families will buy in when they see we respect and build on what is working well in their lives," adds Brown.

Notes of Appreciation

"Initially when Peel Children's Aid became involved with my family, I was angry and scared. Over time, I felt more at ease and felt that my worker was very supportive and went beyond the call of duty. I will always appreciate what she has done for me and particularly for my children. She helped me deal with my addictions and with my children in a more appropriate manner. Most recently, I relapsed and needed to place my child in Peel Children's Aid care as I have no one else to turn to. I did not hesitate in doing so as my daughter received the best quality of care in the foster home she was staying in the last time we were involved with Peel Children's Aid. I appreciate the understanding and support I received from both the foster parents and my worker. It has helped me through many difficult times."

- Single mother with addiction issues

"When my mom told me that I would be going back into care again I was not too worried because I was going back to the same foster home and the same worker. My foster parents are nice and caring and their house is so quiet and peaceful. I like it there. My worker is really cool and she makes me feel like I can talk to her about anything. They are all helping me with lots of different things and they really listen to me. My foster parents make me feel like I am part of their family. This makes me feel special."

- 14 year old child of mother with addiction issues

"Peel Children's Aid and its staff have demonstrated a true commitment to working collaboratively with community organizations to promote an effective coordinated response to the issue of violence against women and its impact on children in Peel."

- Lenora Sleep, Project Manager, Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse

"We have witnessed tremendous commitment by the staff of Peel Children's Aid, to work collaboratively with community partners to meet the seemingly endless need for child welfare. We have been fortunate to work with Peel Children's Aid in a partnership program that supports families experiencing domestic violence. This program could not be the success it is without the commitment of Peel Children's Aid staff who are hard working and dedicated and meet with challenging and difficult situations on a daily basis."

- Paddy Ramsingh, Executive Director, Family Services of Peel

"Looking back, I'm so amazed at the wonderful things that Peel Children's Aid has done for me for almost half of my young adult life. I often wonder why I've been so lucky to have the chance at life. You see, I was 10 years old when my father started to sexually abuse me.... After Peel Children's Aid became involved I was placed in a foster home... I was overwhelmed by the endless love that I received from these strangers. For the first time in my life, I felt safe. I would not be the same person I am today had it not been for this wonderful family who lovingly and unconditionally took me into their home."

- A Peel Children's Aid client who recently celebrated her 20th birthday.

"Simply put, Peel Children's Aid helps families to raise their children without losing their focus on the need to ensure that all the children in Peel Region are protected from abuse and neglect. The staff members at Children's Aid are professional, progressive, effective, efficient and compassionate. Peel Children's Aid is a leader in the social service continuum of services in Peel Region."

-Mark Creedon, Executive Director, Catholic Family Services Peel Dufferin

"As a community partner working on behalf of children, youth and families in our community, we

highly value and respect the skill and dedication which Peel Children's Aid brings to our community. Peel Children's Aid staff works diligently to create a safe and nurturing environment for all who come to their door and we, as the Peel community, are a much better place as a result."

- Humphrey Mitchell, Executive Director, Peel Children's Centre

"We are aware and appreciative of the difficult and critical support that Peel Children's Aid provides for many of the most vulnerable individuals in our community. Peel Children's Aid is recognized as a strong public sector organization and partner with capable, caring, dedicated and skilled staff who are also known for their professionalism and having the best interests of children at heart. Our staff speaks highly of the partnership that has grown over the past several years between Peel Children's Aid and the Children's Services Division, where I am advised that Peel Children's Aid staff routinely go the extra mile to protect and support children and families at risk."

- Janet Menard, (Acting) Commissioner, Social Services, The Region of Peel

"Over the last several years, Hope Place Centres has partnered successfully with Peel Children's Aid workers to support mothers with addictions and their children. Because of our cooperation and collaboration, children and families are receiving the help they need."

- Heather MacDonald, Program Manager, Baby's Best Beginnings, Hope Place Centres-

"Peel Children's Aid staff and volunteers are deeply committed to caring for our community's most vulnerable children. They do an excellent job of ensuring children, in Peel, develop into healthy, self-sufficient adults, by providing them with safe, secure, and nurturing environments."

- Shelley White, CEO, United Way of Peel Region

OUR MISSION: To protect children and strengthen families and communities through partnership. **OUR VISION:** Every child cherished.