

Unique partnership addresses issues facing teens and parents

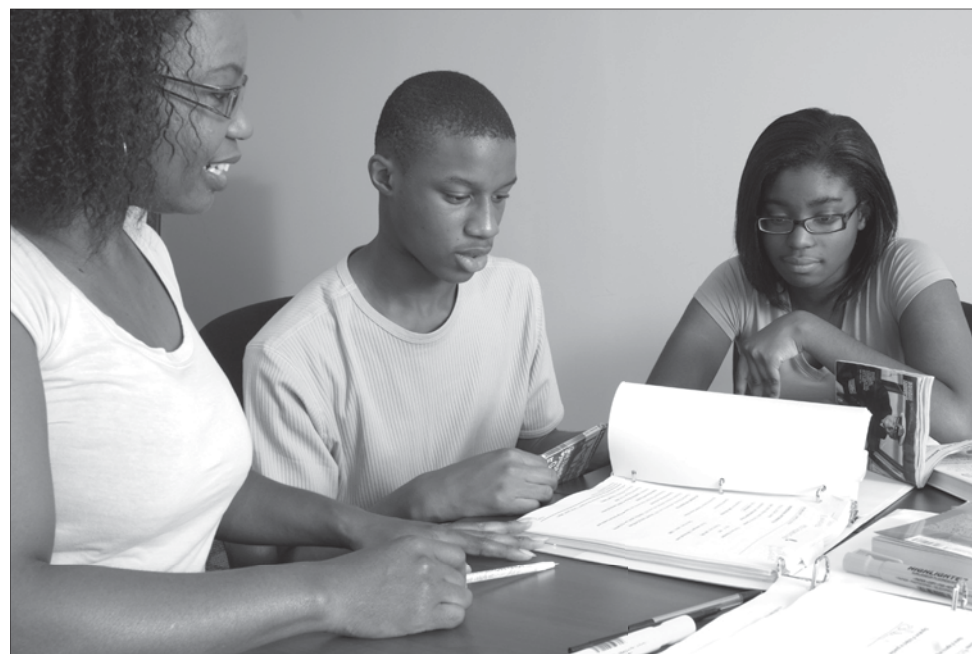
Each year, Peel Children's Aid works with more than 200 parents and teens experiencing conflict that is causing family upheaval. In order to meet the needs of these families, the agency has created an Adolescent Team in partnership with Associated Youth Services of Peel (AYSP) and Peel Wraparound Process. This partnership combines child protection with the specialized services of child and youth workers to respond to the unique challenges these youth and families face.

"The services this team can provide to teens and their families are more specific to their needs," says Sandra Garibotti, Adolescent Team Supervisor, Peel Children's Aid. "Youth involved in adolescent parent conflict may be experiencing risk factors such as a severe breakdown in communication, conflict with the law, running away or substance abuse. We ensure there is no immediate safety issue then use negotiation, shared decision making and together with community partners, work through the conflict and problems these families are facing."

The goal of the Adolescent Team is to reduce the number of youth who ultimately come into

the care of Peel Children's Aid. "We know from research and experience, that youth who are placed out of the home don't do as well as they would if they were able to remain at home with their family," says Garibotti. "If a teen does have to come into our care then it is our goal to work with them and their family to have them return home as quickly as possible."

Calls involving parent-adolescent conflict are assessed by a Peel Children's Aid social worker to determine if the family will benefit from the specialized services of the Adolescent Team. Every family who is referred to the team has a social worker from the Adolescent Team at Peel Children's Aid, and the opportunity



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to work with an Adolescent Team Youth Worker from Associated Youth Services of Peel and a Wraparound Facilitator from Peel Wraparound Process.

"We meet with the family as a team to determine the best way we can help them," says Garibotti. "When appropriate the youth then meets with their Adolescent Team Youth Worker individually and the family works with the Facilitator from Peel Wraparound Process to focus on developing and maintaining a support team for both the adolescents and their families."

The success of the Adolescent Team comes from the unique partnership between three community agencies with the same goal – to protect children and strengthen families.

"We aim to decrease family conflict and build positive relationships between adolescents and their families," says Erin DiCarlo, supervisor,

AYSP. "The AYSAP Adolescent Team Youth Worker provides in home and community support to youth between the ages of 12-15 years and works together with Peel Children's Aid to develop and deliver a customized service plan for adolescents and their families."

At Peel Wraparound Process the aim is very similar. "We build on the strengths of each youth and their family to develop an individualized plan that supports the youth within their home and community," says Teri Gordon, Supervisor, Peel Wraparound Process. "This partnership enables us to provide a team of formal and informal supports to 'wrap around' the youth and family, helping them to resolve their conflict and stay together."

If you are experiencing significant conflict with your adolescent, please call the Intake Department at Peel Children's Aid at 905-363-6131.

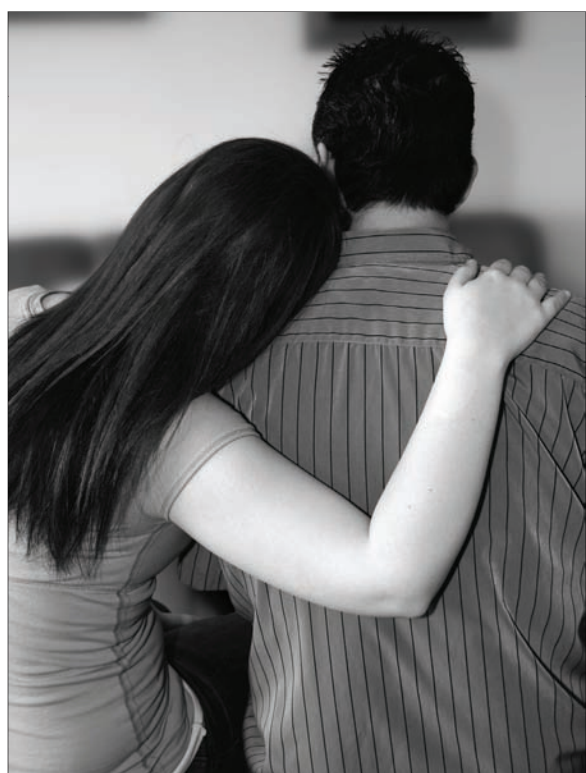
PARENTING TEENS

- Teens need clear limits and structure but parents should be flexible and willing to negotiate.
- Work with teens to solve problems together.
- Hurtful comments don't help a teen to learn from his or her mistakes. Youth will learn better if we stick to the facts such as:
 - What the teen did wrong
 - The behaviour you would expect or prefer
 - How you feel

For example, "You didn't let me know where you were and I was worried. You need to call if you are going to be out late."

- Parenting teens is never easy. Parents should get as much support as possible including friends, family or even a support group.

Family overcomes adversity with help of Children's Aid Society



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Joe spent a lot of years being absent from his daughter Megan's life. However, when she said she needed his help to get out of an abusive living situation he knew he had to face his own issues and become the father she deserved. "When Megan reached out to me, I realized that I had to do what was best for her," says Joe.

Although Joe had faced many obstacles in his life, he had already begun to get help to overcome these challenges which included long-term addiction and drug abuse. "It is amazing what can happen when you ask for help," says Joe. "Although I hadn't been there for my daughter as she grew up, she was reaching out to me now and I was prepared to do whatever I could to be a better parent."

Together, Joe and Megan began a long journey that involved working with two other Children's Aid Societies (CASs) before moving to the Peel Region and

becoming involved with Peel Children's Aid. "I had a built in fear of the words Children's Aid," he says. "I thought it meant that your kids would be taken away from you. My attitude has definitely changed since I began working directly with the CAS."

Once referred to Peel Children's Aid, it became apparent that Joe and Megan would benefit from the specialized services offered by the agency's Adolescent Team. Together with partners Associated Youth Services of Peel (AYSP) and Peel Wraparound Process, this team combines child protection with the specialized services of child and youth workers to respond to the risk factors that come along with adolescent parent conflict such as severe breakdown in communication, conflict with the law, running away or substance abuse.

Today, Megan is living with her dad as they try and finalize his request for sole custody. "We have come so far, but we still have a long road ahead of us," says Joe. "Megan has faced so much while I wasn't there for her and I have to build

up her trust in me. At the same time, I am discovering that there is a lot to learn about being a good parent and communicating with a teenage daughter."

Joe has one message that he wants to share with parents who may be facing crisis situations with their own teenagers: "Don't be afraid to ask for help. I would never have been able to do it alone and we are so grateful for the support of Children's Aid and the community partners we are involved with."

Names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

OUR MISSION

To protect children and strengthen families and communities through partnership

OUR VISION

Every child cherished

PEEL CHILDREN'S AID

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

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