



Mental Health and Addictions

Burlington and Caroline Family Health Teams and Reach out Centre for Kids

Caroline Families First Wraparound Program (CFF)



In talking with pediatricians and pediatric psychologists in the Burlington area, staff at Burlington and Caroline Family Health Teams discovered there was a major gap in services for children struggling with mental health concerns. The teams formed a partnership with Reach Out for Kids, the Halton Region's lead agency for child and youth mental health care, to address this gap. Their collaboration produced the Caroline Families First (CFF) program, an approach based on an evidence-based wraparound model of care.

The Caroline Families First program is not only successful, it has broken new ground by working to bridge a gap between primary care and community-based mental health by utilizing a multidisciplinary team; by hiring a peer-support worker; and by co-locating with referring physicians as a way of building a circle of care.

The program uses a family-centred approach and the process is driven and designed by the participant, based on a family's self-identified care goals. Including the family in program design is unique and allows their needs to be considered throughout the process. Client feedback and evaluation make it possible to be very responsive to their needs and suggestions, so the program is continually evolving. The existence of peer-led coffee groups and community-parent workshops are concrete evidence that family input leads to program change and growth. In addition, there are joint meetings between clients and families and the physicians, school and other community agencies



In fact, education is a key piece of the Caroline Families First program. The program has been working to educate the FHT staff on children's mental health and adult mental health supports available in the community. CFF hosted an information fair onsite for FHT staff to expand their knowledge base and expertise in the mental health experience. CFF has also collaborated with program physicians and ROCK (Reach Out Centre for Kids) to host a series of educational workshops for families and providers in the community as a way of expanding on the knowledge being shared and providing more responsive care to patients.

A 2017 McMaster University study funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to evaluate the program clearly demonstrated the program's value to the patient and their families. It also showed that the program is being used to its full capacity and that there is an ongoing demand for additional support. The steering committee, comprising staff, key stakeholders and community physicians, meets monthly to explore how to spread and expand the program to create even more access. Measurement is a key piece of those discussions. The CFF team is currently piloting a Quick Wrap model to increase the number of children, youth and families served.

Program staff is open to sharing its model with other teams and presented at the AFHTO 2018 Conference to do just that. Other provinces have made inquiries about establishing a similar program, thanks to presentations made at other conferences, and CFF was the main reference point for Halton Region when they designed their model for the new co-ordinated service planning initiative.

Key Facts:

- Evidence-based model
- Significant uptake for referrals facilitated by easy screening tool and referral process
- Families self-identify care goals and program makes extensive use of feedback
- Team works collaboratively with many area providers and local agencies, including pediatricians
- Educates FHT members about children's mental health
- Effective wait time management and phasing of provision of care
- Piloting a Quick Wrap model to increase numbers being served