

# HELPING HANDS

NEWSLETTER 1  
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*Helping Hands is a 2 year project funded by the **Stollery Charitable Foundation**. The project aimed to provide young children in shelter with an enhanced level of support as well as integrate, develop, and evaluate promising child support practices that focused on pre-school children. The project was carried out and delivered by the following organizations: The Family Centre, ACWS, LaSalle, Lurana, WINGS, and A Safe Place.*

*The project focused on the provision of attachment based interventions by a Child Therapist to children and their mothers in the participating shelters. The Child Therapist and Child Care staff also worked together and engaged in knowledge transfer. It is hoped that as a result of this project, children will be better supported and mothers better informed and equipped to mitigate the impact of abuse on their children.*

*The content of this newsletter contains the results of the evaluation for Year 1 (September 2010 – August 2011).*

## Overview of Participation and Sessions Provided

### *Second Stage Shelters:*

- The Child Therapist provided theraplay to 17 mothers and 17 target children. Overall, 83 sessions were conducted with mothers and children.
- On average, each mother and child received 4.9 sessions.

### *Emergency Shelters:*

- The Child Therapist provided Theraplay to 18 mothers and 23 target children. Overall, 26 sessions were conducted with mothers and children.
- On average, each mother and child received 1.4 sessions of theraplay.

## Project Outcomes and Results

### *Increased attachment and engagement between mother and child.*

- Mothers and children generally showed increased attachment as treatment progressed; mothers were observed to be more regulated in the 4 dimensions of attachment (i.e., nurturing, engaging, challenging, and structuring).
- Interventions reinforced existing attachment practices employed by Mom and its benefits to the developing child; moms and children showed increased engagement and calmness during the intervention and activities.

### *Children received an enhanced level of services in order to help build their resiliency after exposure to domestic violence.*

- Access to a Therapist was provided and children received timely intervention services.
- Mothers felt more confident in their parenting role which increased their ability to utilize resources and gain additional coping skills.
- Children seemed more content and happy when compared to pre-treatment.

### *Increased shelter worker capacity.*

- Knowledge transfer between Therapist and child care staff occurred in an informal and formal basis.
- Staff felt that knowledge transfer provided new ways of meeting the needs of children and offered mothers with practical activities that can be used once they left shelter.

### *Benefitted shelters and the wider community.*

- Informed community organization of the impact of domestic violence on children as well as informed mothers' understanding of how domestic violence impacted their developing child.
- Shelters benefitted from the consistency and reinforcement of the messages mother received from the project and the messages received in shelter programming.