



Children's Centre Thunder Bay

Client Orientation Handbook

283 Lisgar Street

Thunder Bay, ON P7B 6G6

Phone: (807) 343-5000

Fax: (807) 345-0444

Hours of Operation

Monday to Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

(summer and holidays hours may be subject to change)

Revised: April 2010



Welcome

Welcome to the Children's Centre Thunder Bay. We are very pleased that you have chosen our Centre to work with you and your family. The purpose of this handbook is to provide you some important information about the Centre and how services work. After reading this handbook please feel free to ask your worker any questions or raise any concerns you might have. Whether you are a child, youth, parent or family, our commitment to you is to offer you the most appropriate services that will help improve the quality of your life at home, school and in our community.

The Purpose of the Children's Centre Thunder Bay

We are here to improve the mental health of our community and to assist children and families to overcome their difficulties in order that they may live happier, healthier and more productive lives. We do this by providing a diversity of professional programs and services which meet the changing needs of our community.

Our Values

With the people we serve

- We treat you with respect, honesty, compassion and fairness.
- We work to enhance your ability to solve your own problems.
- We provide a safe environment and respect your privacy.
- Working as partners, we develop mutual goals and plans to respond to your needs.
- We explore, advise, teach, challenge, support and advocate.
- We give and expect feedback on how you are doing and how we are doing.

Within our organization

- We treat each other with respect, honesty, compassion and fairness.
- We promote teamwork that encourages learning, sharing of new ideas, creativity, development of new skills and leadership.
- We accept personal responsibility to be accountable to our clients, our funders and our co-workers in the delivery of quality programs and services.

Within our community

- We strive to meet the diverse needs of children, families and the community by working collaboratively with other organizations.
- We strive to promote the community's understanding and awareness of good mental health practices through education, consultation and advocacy.

What is Consent?

In order to proceed with service you will need to sign a “Consent for Service” form. A “Consent to Service” is like a contract where you formally agree to work with the Children’s Centre so that our workers can provide you and where appropriate your family with mental health services. Your worker can explain further what the form means and how it applies to you and your family.

In some situations, you may want your worker to share reports or gather information from other people. A “Consent to Release or Obtain Information” gives the Centre your permission to obtain information from other professionals such as teachers or doctors, and/or to share information to others such as schools, doctors or other social workers.

In terms of signing consents, if a child is under 12 years, the parent/guardian must give consent. If a child is 12 years or older, the child must give consent.

From time to time your worker may ask you to sign other consents so that we can video tape sessions, gather more information or release reports.

In joint custody situations where the child is under 12, both parents must sign a Consent for Service.

What is Confidentiality?

Confidentiality means we will protect your information and not share it without your permission. There are two ways that we may share information about you with others:

The first and most common situation is when you give us your consent to share information by signing an “Authorization for Release of Information”. This allows us to share information verbally with others or provide others with clinical reports.

When you sign an “authorization” you have the right to tell us:

- What information we can give out about you.
- Whom we can give information to.
- How that information can be used.

The second way is under the Law and we do not need your consent to share information. More specifically, we can share information with:

- Your family (parent, guardian, spouse, other) and other professionals if we believe you will hurt yourself or someone else.
- The Children’s Aid Society or Dilico if child abuse or neglect is suspected.
- The Police, if you plan to harm yourself or others.
- The Courts, if they order us to release reports or information.
- In a Medical Emergency.
- With the Provincial Government Ministry, if required.

What are Your Rights?

As a client of the Children's Centre Thunder Bay, you have the right to:

- Be treated with respect.
- Get help in the language that you speak.
- Confidentiality (with exceptions noted above).
- Take part in the planning of treatment services.
- Take part in the review how treatment is going.
- See your records/file and have copies of your reports.
- Tell us whom we can give information to by signing the "Authorization for Release of Information" form.
- Talk with us if you feel that any decision or treatment is not right for you.

We will also:

- Ask you to sign a "Consent for Service".
- Ask you about any cultural, spiritual or diversity issues that may be important to our work with you.
- Develop a plan with you before we start any treatment.
- Make sure you understand how treatment can help you and what the risks and benefits are.
- Tell you about all the different services or resources that can help you.
- Work with other services or agencies if you wish.
- Tell you how to get help in an emergency.

What are Your Responsibilities?

As a client of the Children's Centre, you are responsible for:

- Providing us with the information we need to offer you the best service possible.
- Providing us with up-to-date personal information for our file.
- Attending and participating in treatment to the best of your ability.
- Calling us at least 24 hours ahead of time to cancel appointments.

Can we E-mail to Communicate?

In some situations, you and your worker may wish to use e-mail to communicate. There are both benefits and risks when using e-mail, particularly with respect to confidentiality. If you and your worker chose to use e-mail then this must be done with your informed consent, knowing that:

- We will not send reports through e-mail.
- We will only check e-mail during working hours.
- We cannot promise that e-mail communication will be confidential.
- We will not do counselling or treatment using e-mail.

What are the Risks and Benefits of Participating in Treatment?

It is important that you understand that there are both risks and benefits of participating in any of the mental health services that the Children's Centre Thunder Bay offers.

Some of the Benefits are:

- Relationships with your family may improve.
- There may be less tension or stress in your family.
- Parents can learn more effective ways of parenting.
- Siblings can get along better.
- You will experience less stress and worry.
- You may be more motivated to change and maintain changes.
- You may develop more self control over your behaviour.
- You will learn about yourself and your strengths.
- You may see your struggles and problems in a new way.
- You can develop new skills and learn healthier ways to cope.
- You will feel less alone and isolated.
- You may experience more hope, optimism and joy in life.
- You can function more effectively at home, school, work and with friends.
- You should feel heard, respected, understood and supported in your struggles.
- Your physical and emotional health may improve.

Some of the Risks are:

- Some family members may not participate in treatment.
- Some family members may not support you in the changes you are making.
- Change may be uncomfortable or even frightening.
- Things may actually get worse before they improve.
- Others like teachers, social workers or family members may not see the changes you are making.
- Change may not occur even though you are trying hard.
- You may learn things about yourself that are hard to hear and to deal with.
- Past issues may be brought up and discussed.
- If you are in a group, you may be impacted by other client's issues.
- You may have to wait to receive formal assessments or to see a doctor.
- We may have to involve Children's aid or Dilico if child protection concerns arise.
- We may be ordered to testify in court.

What About Your File and Personal Health Information?

At the CCTB we are committed to maintaining your confidentiality and privacy with respect to the information contained in your file. More specifically, this refers to what information we collect, how we use your information, how we store the information and how we can share your information.

You should know that we keep a file on the work we are doing with you and your family. Our files have both a hard copy (paper) part and an electronic computer part. For example, your consent is kept in the hard file, and our notes and reports are stored in the computer file. This file may also include information from other agencies that you have given us permission to contact. We need you to provide us with any changes in your personal information so we can change it in our file.

We protect your file and information by keeping it locked up or by using electronic security passwords. We keep your file in a safe place and, even when you are finished treatment and no longer a client at the Children's Centre, we will securely store your file for 20 years as required by the law and, after that time, it will be destroyed.

All staff, consultants, board members, students, volunteers and researchers who are associated with CCTB, are required to sign an "Oath of Confidentiality". This oath requires each person to maintain a client's confidentiality at all times.

As a client, you have the right to access and review the information that is contained in your file. However, you cannot review information about another person. You also have the right to correct the information that is shown to be wrong or inaccurate.

Children's Centre Thunder Bay complies with the Personal Health Information Act (PHIPA), the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), and the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA). If you have any concerns about your information, please ask your worker, the Program Manager or the agency's Privacy Officer, Diane Walker.

Who Will Work With You and Your Family?

Through our intake process we have worked to match you and your family with a service and professional who can best meet your needs.

We have staff trained in a variety of areas such as Social Work, Psychology, Psychiatry, Speech and Language, Early Childhood Education, Child and Youth Work, Developmental Service Work and Nursing. Many of our staff are trained in different speciality areas; for example, autism, parenting, youth justice, substance abuse or trauma. At times different staff may be involved in helping you either directly or indirectly by providing consultation about your case, as needed.

Please ask about this if you have questions.

What if You Have Concerns or Complaints?

If you have concerns or complaints, we want to hear from you. For example:

- You may feel you are not being treated respectfully by our staff.
- You are not comfortable with what is happening in meetings or treatment.
- You feel your rights have been violated.

Here are five steps to take if you have a problem:

1. Talk to your Worker(s).

First, try to talk to your Worker(s) to resolve the problem.

If you talk to your Worker(s) and you can't resolve the problem, then go to the Supervisor or Program Manager.

If you don't want to tell your Worker(s) how you feel, then you can ask to talk to the Program Manager first.

2. Talk to the Program Manager. Their name is _____.

Tell the Program Manager that you have some concerns. Let the Program Manager know:

- What the problem is.
- What you have done about it.
- What you want to happen now.
- You may have to put this in writing. We can assist you with this if needed.

The Program Manager will look into any problems right away and may call meetings with everyone to discuss concerns. The Program Manager will get back to you within 10 working days to let you know what has been done to address the problem.

3. Talk to the Director of Programs and Clinical Services, Diane Walker.

If steps 1 and 2 did not help you, then talk to the Director. This person will meet with you and all the others involved and will try to help you. The Director of Programs and Clinical Services will write to you within 20 working days to let you know what has been done to address the problem.

4. Talk to the Executive Director, Tom Walters.

If you are still not happy with the result, you can call or write to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will write to you within 20 working days to let you know what has been done to address the problem.

5. Or you can contact the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Call 1-800-263-2841 at any time or e-mail advocacy@provincialadvocate.on.ca

How Else Can Parents or Youth Get Involved?

Parents can get involved in the Children's Centre Thunder Bay by:

- Providing us with feedback about our services.
- Participating in focus groups or other forums organized by the Centre.
- Participating in research or evaluation conducted by the Centre.
- Joining the Board of Directors when you are no longer a client.
- Volunteering for the Children's Centre Foundation.

How Can You Let us Know How we are Doing?

At the CCTB, we strive to provide you with quality services. At different times during your involvement you may be asked to fill out the "Client Satisfaction Questionnaire" or to provide us with feedback about our work. This lets us know how we can make changes in our service to help you better. We like to hear your ideas and thoughts and very much value your feedback.

Missed Appointments

As a client agreeing to service, it is very important that you attend your scheduled appointments or call to cancel 24 hours in advance. Missed appointments are not helpful as they waste clinical time that could be used for other clients. For Brief Services, our policy is if you miss or "no show" any appointment, a letter will be sent and your file will be closed immediately. For all other services, if you miss or "no show" three appointments, your file will be closed.

What can You do in a Crisis or Emergency?

If you or your family are in a crisis or emergency situation, we encourage you to call the following services for help or assistance:

- If someone is at risk of hurting themselves, you should call 911 for immediate assistance or take the person to the hospital emergency department.
- If you are experiencing a mental health crisis and need some help, you can call the Canadian Mental Health Crisis Response Service at 346-8282. They have a 24-hour phone line and 12-hour mobile response service.
- During office hours, you can call your worker at CCTB, however, if your worker is not available, your call may be directed to another mental health professional at the Centre. Please call 343-5000 and the receptionist will redirect your call.
- If you are worried about a child or have concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, you can call the Children's Aid Society at 343-6100 or Dilico at 625-8511.
- You can also access the Walk-in Counselling Clinic for single session counselling every Wednesday from 12:00 to 8:00 p.m. at either the Children's Centre or the Thunder Bay Counselling Centre. Please call 343-5000 for more information.
- Here are a few more numbers that might be helpful to you:
 - Telehealth 1-866-797-0000
 - Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

**The Children's Centre Thunder Bay is
Supported and Funded by:**

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services

The Ministry of Health & Long Term Care

The Ministry of the Attorney General

The City of Thunder Bay (DSSAB)

The United Way

and the

The Children's Centre Foundation