

Family Services of the North Shore COVID-19 Response Overview

Updated April 3, 2020

Family Services of the North Shore is open, operational, and providing support and services across our North Shore communities, virtually and in response to evolving needs.

When the crisis landed in our community, and in response to government recommendations and direction from health officials relative to COVID-19, Family Services of the North Shore quickly adapted all of our counselling, parent support and outreach services from in-person to virtual. Here is a summary of how we have shifted to provide new support, as well as to ensure continuity of our existing services and programs for our clients.

New COVID-19 Specific Support

Free Counselling Support for those directly impacted

This new service is available for anyone impacted by this crisis including first responders, overwhelmed parents, and anyone feeling anxious, fearful, isolated, depressed – or grieving the loss of someone they love. Our highly skilled counsellors are standing by on a dedicated phone line to provide the immediate support you need. They will schedule ongoing sessions as needed and also help inform and navigate let additional supports available. Up to six weeks of free service is available.

- Dedicated phone number: **236-982-9871**, Monday to Friday (9am-5pm)

THRIVE FAMILY PROGRAMS, for families and caregivers with children aged 0-6 years, is delivering services virtually. Program offerings are being promoted through the Thrive Facebook page, agency website, and Interagency Network. Current virtual programs include:

- Parent Support Group offered weekly via Zoom virtual meeting platform.
- Breastfeeding Postpartum Support Group offered weekly via Zoom.
- Individual phone support with Kim Laforest, Family Support Navigator.
- Circle Time (music/stories) weekday mornings at 10am via video recording.
- Facebook posts featuring content on coping with the stresses of COVID-19 while parenting.

Future Thrive virtual programming may include:

- Parent Conversation Circles with parent-focused education topics via live virtual platform

COUNSELLING SUPPORT

We continue to support our **Children, Youth, Individuals, Couples and Family** counselling clients and have adapted our processes and platforms by:

- Providing services to clients through phone and/or video sessions.
- Offering additional focused individual sessions to accommodate cases where couple or family work is not appropriate for virtual/remote sessions.
- Offering additional focused individual sessions for parents if the age of their child precludes their ability to engage in online or phone support, rather than play therapy.
- Creating flexible fee payment procedures.

- Our **Family Preservation and Support** services for families and children at risk continue through phone counselling and/or via privacy-compliant online platforms in consultation with MCFD.

GROUP SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Our weekly drop-in support group for **parents of gender diverse youth** has successfully moved to an online platform and continues to take place.

Our **YouthLAB (Youth Leadership Advisory Board)** volunteer group is continuing to meet virtually and is working on ways to carry on with the delivery of their current youth-led, expressive art inspired mental health campaign, and are also determining new and reworked engagement strategies for high school peers.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA SUPPORT

We know that gender based violence and child abuse increase dramatically when disasters strike, as well in the short-, medium-, and long-term recovery times post disaster. Our dedicated counselling program provides support services to women who are dealing with violence, and continues to be offered through phone counselling and/or via privacy compliant online platforms. We have implemented additional screening measures and clinical case planning to build increased safety for our new virtual environment.

SENIORS AND CAREGIVERS

Through our established Seniors and Caregivers programs, the following is either in place or being planned for near-term delivery:

- Individual-personalized phone support for clients who have participated in our Grief Support Group, Home Visits, Gentle Yoga and Relaxation Group.
- Individual-personalized phone support for caregivers caring for an older adult at home.
- Grief Support Group is planned for weekly delivery via Zoom online platform starting in April.
- Our team is actively coordinating with our community partners/organizations to identify caregivers needing phone support.

Future virtual programming may include:

- Caregiver Support Circles offered via Zoom.

VOLUNTEER OUTREACH TO CHRISTMAS BUREAU SENIORS AND CHRISTMAS BUREAU FAMILIES

Our volunteers are calling seniors and families who have been recipients of our Christmas Bureau, to check-in and determine any needs they may have at this time, that we can assist with.

- Volunteers are making calls to 200 seniors who accessed the Christmas Bureau this past year and will continue these calls on an ongoing basis through this crisis. Call frequency will be determined based on initial contact and assessment of isolation.
- Emotional support will be provided to reduce isolation and assist with referrals to other types of supports services.

- Volunteers are making ongoing-weekly phone calls to the 800 families who accessed the Christmas Bureau this past year, offering a check-in and emotional support, and assistance with referrals where needed.

JESSIE'S LEGACY supports the prevention of eating disorders and disordered eating. We recognize that current quarantine and social distancing protocols can significantly impact regular eating and exercise routines, resulting in distress and/or challenges with mood regulation. The following supports are planned or in place:

- Continuing phone and email support.
- Social media platforms continue to promote available services in ways relevant to the audience, and to our current global and local situations relative to COVID-19.
- Increased engagement and interaction with our online audience via social media surveys and polls to assess what kind of content would be most helpful at this time.
- Delivery of content related to coping and resilience skills specific to the stresses of COVID-19 across online platforms including Jessie's Legacy website blog, Jessie's Legacy spring e-newsletter, Facebook, and Instagram.
- Additional social media surveys and polls to increase engagement and interaction with our online audience as the crisis progresses.

We continue to evolve and adapt in response to the current COVID-19 situation, and in response to the needs of the community we all love. We encourage anyone on the North Shore who feels like they are struggling and in need of mental health and/or parenting support to reach out to us via our website, www.familyservices.bc.ca, or by phone, 604-988-5281. Our intake counsellors will work with you to determine your needs.