

FRESH START SUPPORT SERVICES

Fall 2021 Newsletter

Dear Friends of Fresh Start,

Getting my kids from their crib when they woke up in the morning was always my favourite. I would walk into their room half asleep to see them standing at the railing of their crib so excited to see me. They would bounce, wiggle, and kick their arms and legs as I lifted them from their crib to give them hugs and kisses. This experience, day after day, morning after morning, created an understanding for them. An understanding that when they wake up in the morning, Mommy will come get them, they will get a new diaper, and a snuggle while drinking their bottle while Mommy tried to sleep a little bit longer.

This understanding, along with understandings from other experiences, creates a codebook (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). The codebook is made from a collection of understandings from all areas of their life. A code from their codebook might tell them that when they get put into their highchair that they will get something yummy to eat. That when the water is turned on in the bathtub that they are going to play in the water. Going to a park means that they will go in the swing. Hearing the fire alarm means that Mommy is baking. (My young children would run to wave a cloth under the smoke alarm when they were make-believe cooking, since their mother modelled burning cookies in the oven all of the time). As we get older, our codebook grows with the codes from new experiences and helps us anticipate what is about to happen and what to expect.

But, what happens if the codebook codes for bad things? What if the codebook codes that the house will be empty and dark when you come home from school? That you need to make yourself dinner if you want to eat? That you put yourself to bed? Or, that being in a relationship means being yelled at, being scared of, and being hit by your partner? What if these things are normal, everyday experiences? They know it's not right, but don't have any experience with something different. Not only do these people have a high chance of creating similar experiences and understandings for their own children, but their body is reacting to the stress of these events. They might start disassociating; having chronic stress, anxiety, and depression; and using substances to help deal with these experiences. These experiences, and how they react to them, begin to be passed on through generations to impact the next generations codes and codebooks. This cycle of intergenerational trauma is what Fresh Start is seeking to stop by supporting families in making sense of their codebook and creating different positive experiences for their own children.

For the last month, Fresh Start's staff have been reflecting on how we as an agency can be more trauma informed, meaning that we recognize and respond to the signs, symptoms, and risks of trauma to better care for the families we support. One of the tools that we are using to reflect on our trauma informed care practices is reading Dr. Bruce Perry's new book called "What Happened to You?" and different academic literature. If you are interested in learning more about trauma, resilience, and healing, this is an outstanding evidence-based book that explains trauma in conversational language. We have been sharing some of our learnings on our Facebook page. Look for for Fresh Start Support Services on Facebook to follow along.

Karen Schouten

Executive Director

Ways to Give This Season

Donations can be made by:

- giving online on our website www.fsms.ca
- sending an e-transfer to financials@fsms.ca
- mailing a cheque to 118 Centre St., St Thomas, Ontario, N5R 2Z9

Financial Update

*We were very blessed to have received CEWS almost monthly this past year to help lower staffing costs by over \$115,000.

July - September

Revenue: \$73,811.90

Expenses: \$80,721.87

Year to Date

Sept 2020 - Sept 2021

Revenue: \$391,707.25

Expenses: \$264,895.10*

Story of a fresh start ...

I was doing drugs.
I was homeless or staying at a family shelter.
I was having seizures because I wasn't taking my medication.
My mental health wasn't great.
I was told that if I didn't make a change that I was going to lose my son forever.
I wasn't ready to make this change and kept saying no to my social worker,
but decided to talk with the Program Manager at Fresh Start.
When Fresh Start offered me a place, I decided to do to start
making changes for me and my son.
Since coming to Fresh Start, I've learned that my son truly loves me!
I'm still working on believing in myself, but I'm getting there.
I keep telling myself, "Just be calm and patient... You can do this!"

Program Update

We are excited to almost be finished the planning stages of our construction project. In February or March of 2022, construction to build four apartments in our current facility will take place. Fresh Start was blessed to receive a \$150,000 grant from Ontario Trillium Fund and \$50,000 from St Thomas Elgin Community Foundation to allow for this project to take place. We will keep you updated as plans are finalized.

Welcome Traci

We are excited to announce the addition of Traci English to the Fresh Start team. Traci will be joining the team as Program Manager after saying goodbye to Julie Watson, who is moving back home to be with family.



Traci comes to Fresh Start with diverse experience working with children, youth, and families in healthcare, child welfare, and correction service settings. She brings compassion and respect as she utilizes a strength based, trauma informed lens of care and practice. Traci's clinical experience in areas of diagnosis and treatment planning, along with being skilled in several evidence-based practices, will help Fresh Start pull from several modalities to meet families where they are at. Traci also works as a Professor at Fanshawe College teaching in the Child and Youth Care program. Please help us welcome Traci and wish her many blessings in this role.

Fresh Start is looking for volunteer

**BOARD
MEMBERS**

and

**FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEMBERS**

Terms are for two years, and start in January. There are ten meetings per year for board members, and four meetings for finance committee members.

If you have board governance experience or financial experience, and are interested in learning more about serving at Fresh Start, please email director@fsms.ca for more information!