



Centre for
Children and
Families in the
Justice System

of the London Family Court Clinic

*a*s morning broke, Nicholas stepped into the chill of the stream and waded through the oily slick that drifted over the surface. He stopped to peer into the reeds. There, as ever, he found the young birds fouled by the slick, unable to either swim or fly. Gently, he picked each fledgling from the water, untangled it from the sticky reeds, cleaned off its feathers as best he could, and set it down again. Some would paddle their way downstream, others found the shore. But many more were simply beyond rescuing.

As the sun rose high, a traveller approached. "What are you doing?" the traveller called. "I'm trying to save the birds," Nicholas answered. The traveller crouched on the bank and watched a while. Then he said "This is good work you're doing. The world is a better place for the birds you saved today." Nicholas looked up. "So I hope," he said. "But I'm afraid it's too little, too late. By tomorrow, the reeds will be full of more young birds."

The traveller frowned. He gazed along the banks, squinted into the reeds, and turned back to Nicholas. The traveller stood and stepped into the water. "Tell me what to do," he offered. "Just do what I'm doing," Nicholas replied, "so I can get on my way."

"But why?" the traveller wanted to know. "Where are you going?"

"*Upstream,*" Nicholas told him.

"It's time to find out what is polluting the water."



upstream

*Promoting safer communities
by integrating research and practice*



Breaking the cycle

The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinic originated nearly 30 years ago, founded to meet the special needs of children involved in the court system:

- ...as victims of violence
- ...as witnesses to crime
- ...as troubled youth who break the law

Inevitably, our focus was quickly expanded to embrace the families of the children we serve, our community, government agencies and others like us who work toward solutions to social problems.

Over the years, the Centre has developed many innovative programs, working on multiple fronts to respond to the needs of families and foster safer communities. Our work includes clinical assessment, counselling and referral services, public education and professional training.

Along the way, we have learned a great deal about crime, victimization and abuse and their effects on our society. Our most important lesson:

- ...case-by-case intervention simply is not enough to have a lasting impact on community safety.

The Centre continues to work with individuals and families struggling with adversity, but we also look beyond daily practice to investigate ways of preventing crime, victimization and the scars they leave on people, communities and society. Increasingly, the purpose of the Centre is to look “upstream” to stop problems before they start.

*“case-by-case
intervention
simply is
not enough...”*





“All of us are in this together”



It's true: crime and abuse in all their forms undermine the well-being of all children and families; for the health and safety of our communities, everyone shares a responsibility to understand, intervene and prevent violence against children.

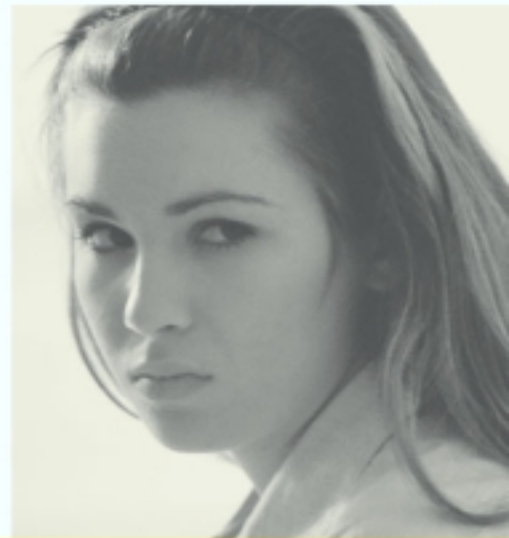
Through many years of clinical service, our Centre has had a front-line role in creating a safer future. We have supported, listened and learned from thousands of people who have been personally affected by violence in their lives:

- We have supported 1,000 victimized children who had to give evidence in court, usually as a result of abuse and other violent crime
- We have assessed 4,000 young people in conflict with the law
- We have advised in over 1,500 cases to help courts make decisions in the best interests of

children when their parents are in conflict after separation and divorce

- We have helped establish parenting plans for 60 families where children's safety or well-being in their homes is in question
- We have counselled 2,500 adolescents who could not live at home
- We have advocated for dozens of adults who sought redress for crimes perpetrated against them as children

But stopping violence and victimization of the vulnerable means interrupting the transmission of violence from one generation to the next. The imperative to break that cycle compelled us to expand our mandate. Community-based programs



“Police can be proactive in preventing crime instead of just arresting offenders after the harm has been done. The Centre's programs remind us that our most important work may be reaching out to children in troubled families. They also demonstrate how commitment to today's troubled youth will pay dividends in preventing tomorrow's adult criminals.”

Julian Fantino

Chief of Police, Toronto Police Service



“The Centre has been an essential partner with the justice system for almost 30 years. It plays an invaluable role helping judges to navigate the complex dilemmas they face in domestic violence cases. Its staff has pioneered the development of innovative programs for children and families and they have given voice to the special needs of children who are called upon to testify in court.”

*Chief Judge Heino Lilles
Territorial Court of Yukon
Whitehorse, Yukon*

on children.

Our current work includes promoting school programs that teach students about healthy relationships, and we developed a comprehensive school-based anti-violence curriculum educators can use in the classroom and in the school yard. On the home front, our media awareness campaign encourages families to spend time together and to enjoy non-violent entertainment. And we promote awareness about how children are affected when they live in homes where their mothers are abused.

*“working
to reduce the
incidence of
violence and
mitigate its
life-long effects”*

The Centre also addresses the role of legislation and law enforcement in breaking the cycle of violence.

We worked with community colleagues to develop the first mandatory charging policy for wife assault in Canada. We pioneered new techniques to reduce the trauma of child victims who have to testify in court, and we created a collaborative model providing more effective support to troubled youth as they are moved from facility to facility.

Violence seems to permeate our society today, but building more prisons is not the answer. The cycle of violence is a complex problem; it has no simple solution.



Imagine a world where all children are free from harm

*“developing
new programs,
policy initiatives
and future
research
directions.”*

We believe it's possible. This is the vision that drives us forward.

Research at the Centre strives to advance our communities' understanding of the families we serve. We investigate the needs of children and families, and evaluate the effectiveness of crime prevention, correctional and other interventions. Our studies are providing new qualitative and quantitative knowledge that shapes recommendations for new programs, policy initiatives and future research directions.

Evaluating programs

As communities across Canada introduce new programs, they can call on our Centre to appraise their effectiveness and recommend improvements. We conducted Canada's first randomized, multi-site study of a crime prevention technique for serious young offenders. We are evaluating the use of mediation in child protection, and Health Canada has asked us to interview former clients of the Child Witness Project. Our hope is that their insights, memories, and reflections will lead to recommendations for refining child witness services.

Expanding knowledge

Our Centre designs and undertakes new studies to further our understanding of how crime and abuse affect children and communities. A three-year study has examined the effects of exposure to violence, high-conflict divorce and poverty on children. Another study will help us understand the needs of children whose mothers are in prison. As government agencies consider new policies and legal changes, we fill a role in assessing what these changes can mean to children and families.

Sharing resources

The search for family safety is an international one. Our Centre works to share our experience and insights by publishing reports and sponsoring events that have become widely valued by other practitioners, researchers and policy makers. We prepare literature reviews and draft recommendations for developing or refining programs. We also advise community agencies on effective ways to prepare their staff for work with children and families. In just the past 20 years, our staff team has produced more than 150 books, research reports, program and training manuals, parent resources, and articles in professional journals, helping to spread our experiences worldwide.

Educating communities

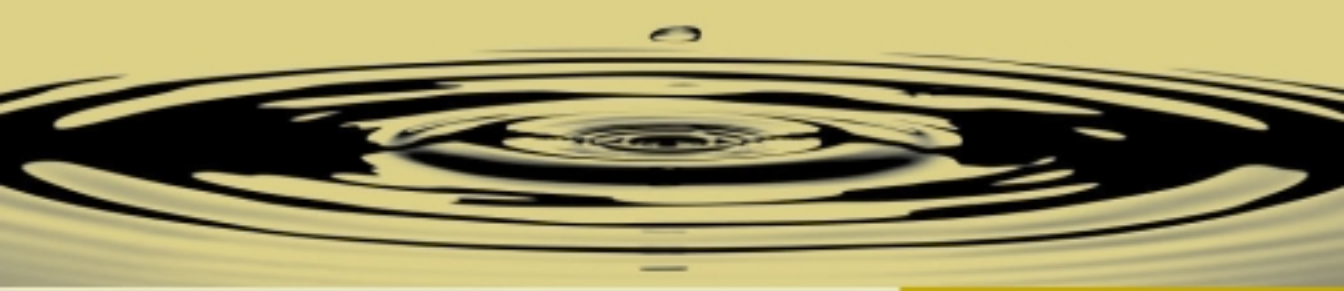
A strong, well-informed community is essential to the prevention of crime and abuse, and for effective support of families. Through on-site internship and placements for post-secondary students, we help the next generation of professionals to understand better the needs of families in crisis. Our varied training programs enhance the skills of community agencies to recognize the effects of violence on children and how to intervene early and effectively. Finally, our public awareness programs raise recognition of how everyone can take an active role in building a violence-free community.



"The Centre stands out as an organization that is successful in integrating research and practice. They extract the essential information from research studies across many disciplines and recognize the implications for front-line professionals. Moreover, they communicate this knowledge in helpful ways. Their manuals, handbooks and training have had an unmistakable influence on the field."

Lucy Salcido Carter, M.A., J.D.

David and Lucile Packard Foundation



Taking the search “upstream”

Our Centre has grown into a dynamic multi-disciplinary team of staff, volunteers and students with a committed board of directors and productive linkages with our community partners.

To be successful in our quest for lasting solutions to crime in our communities, the Centre must be able to plan effectively and to ensure continuity for its programs. While we are fortunate to receive grants and support from varied sources for many of our programs, the Centre undertakes many more important activities which are not funded.



The Upstream Endowment has been created for this purpose – to build a stable source of funds that will give the Centre the sound footing it needs to enable long-term planning, to provide continuity in our resources, and to develop a productive environment for research activities.

If you share our vision...

- of families that nurture and guide their children
- of schools where students are safe and receptive to learning
- of communities that come together to solve local problems
- of a legal system that is accessible, informed, and responds to the needs of children and families
- of a nation that invests in children today to yield dividends tomorrow in reduced school failure, unemployment and crime
- of a world where every child can achieve his or her potential

...support our cause.

Give generously and come with us as we take our search to the source, “upstream.”

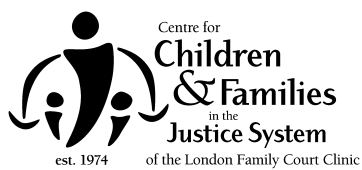


“An investment in the Centre is an investment in the future well-being of Canadian children. Their research, advocacy and clinical work on behalf of vulnerable children is a national treasure.”

*Hon. Margaret Norrie McCain
Former Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick,
Co-chair of the “Early Years Study: Reversing the Real Brain Drain”*

“In light of the many competing influences on children’s attitudes – media, peers, and family – the Centre’s programs have become essential to our violence prevention efforts. Their impact is felt in schools across the country and internationally.”

*John Laughlin
Director of Education,
Thames Valley District
School Board (1997-2001)*



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