

Compassionate Community Case Study

Play Therapy – Outreach to Children & Teens

Nanaimo, BC

What you need to know	
Organization	Nanaimo Community Hospice Society
Website	https://www.nanaimohospice.com/
Contact information	Paul Sibley – Executive Director - PaulS@nanaimohospice.com
Target Audience	Children, teens, and other underserved populations (e.g. homeless, former Tent City residents)
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to underserved populations, including teenagers and children through school visits, using play therapy and a play therapy RV • Most services 1 on 1; some siblings; some group therapy and counselling
A story to share	A 7-year-old comes into the play therapy room, one that is essentially like a toy store. This engages the young person so that a natural conversation begins.
Needs/Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nanaimo Community Hospice decided to put more emphasis on people who traditionally have more barriers to physically coming to hospice, especially children, teens and underserved populations (e.g. homeless community). • Strategic plan - go beyond usual demographic (middle class women, aged 55-70) • Philosophy – “If children are old enough to love, they are old enough to grieve. Children grieve in waves and the intensity, duration and frequency of these waves are neither linear nor predictable.” • Provide outreach to schools (via a dedicated RV) to youth and children. Also reach out to other underserved populations (e.g. homeless). • Capital campaign raised money for the RV, improved youth website and other resources, plus 3 years operating funding. • RV purchased and refitted to have a play therapy room • Use play, art and psychosocial therapy with two 2 certified play therapists

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play therapy room: art supplies, sand trays, punching bags, toys, figurines (allows child or youth to tell story without necessarily talking) • RV will travel 1x/ week; 1 trained volunteer accompanies therapist for child safety • Referrals to the program are from schools, families, doctors, churches and community agencies. People 16 or older can refer themselves. (youngest client is three)
Outcomes/Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program is just launched Fall 2019 • Nanaimo Community Hospice hopes to increase the number of children and teens served to more than the current 40 youth clients • Also planning to improve youth resources, including youth website
Cost to Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free
What is needed to initiate a similar activity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can do scaled down version targeting children and youth without RV • Costs increase with professional staff (e.g. play therapists) • RV + modification + operating funding (3 years) was \$85,000 • Plus, volunteer time
Existing Toolkit/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.nanaimobulletin.com/community/nanaimo-community-hospice-society-to-launch-mobile-unit/ • https://www.nanaimohospice.com/support/child-youth-grief-support/ • Descriptive PowerPoint slides
Evaluation/Progress	
Challenges/obstacles	<p>Challenge: Important to have a relationship with the school district We addressed this challenge by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presenting at PD days (including some where teachers come to the hospice) • developing a Memorandum of Understanding <p>Challenge: Getting people to recognize how important it is for kids to have grief counselling and support We addressed this challenge by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If you’re here, how are your kids doing? Who are the kids talking to? They do know what’s going on. Left unaddressed, they sow seeds for things later in life” - Paul Sibley, Nanaimo Community Hospice <p>Challenge: Many images on website convey image of hospice as a seniors’ organization</p>

	We are addressing this by developing a separate website and youth-specific resources
Learnings/Surprises	“It is easier to have a successful fundraising campaign raising money for capital items related to children” - Paul Sibley
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success rides on ability to make connections with youth • Use capital campaign to raise funds for operating funds as well (roll in to be part of the total budget) • Also have play therapy room at the hospice (not just the mobile unit) • One volunteer driver to accompany play therapist to ensure child/teen safety • Most referrals come through presentations to schools, parents referring students, and parents who have gone through grief support programs

Fall 2019