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“A Vital Christian Presence in Social Work”

PASTORAL SUPPORT IN CHILD WELFARE

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**Presented at:
NACSW Convention 2009
October, 2009
Indianapolis, IN**

CATHOLIC CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF TORONTO (CCAS)

History

- In 1893 the Archbishop of Toronto, the Most Reverend J. Walsh, invited a group of laypeople to address “the growing problem of orphaned and abandoned children.”
- Founded in 1894, the St. Vincent de Paul Children's Aid Society
- St. Vincent de Paul; 17th Century France
- A Pastor who engaged the Catholic community to help the sick, the elderly, the poor, orphaned children
- Patron of Charitable work in the Catholic Church

Spirit of St. Vincent de Paul

Vincent had connections with French royalty and recruited ladies among the nobility to assist:

“Put off your jewels and fine clothing. Visit the poor and treat them openly and respectfully as persons of quality, avoiding all stiffness. To send money is good but we have not really begun to serve the poor until we visit them.”

“The lady visitor will serve her patient with as much love as if she were waiting on her own son, nay rather, on God Himself.”

Archdiocese of Toronto & Catholic Charities

1.9 million Roman Catholics (includes regional municipalities)

Catholic Charities is a ministry of the Archdiocese of Toronto which responds to those in need, delivers services “in a manner that reflects the values and mission of the Church and in partnership with the Catholic community, its parish communities and member agencies.” There are 27 member agencies. CCAS is not funded by Catholic Charities but the Foundation receives occasional project funding.

The Society's services must be consistent with the pastoral, moral and social teachings of the Catholic Church.

Pastoral Teaching: Love one another

Moral Teaching: Do what is good

Social Teaching: Act with justice

Canadian Culture/Toronto

Toronto's population is over 2.5 million (5.5 million in the Greater Toronto Area) and is one of the most multicultural cities in the world with over 140 languages and dialects spoken. Between 2001 – 2006 Canada received 1, 109, 980 international immigrants; Toronto welcomed about one quarter of all immigrants (267,855) to Canada during this period of about 55,000 annually. 47% of Toronto's population report being part of a visible minority (Statistics Canada, Census 2006)

Top five visible minority groups:

- South Asian 12%
- Chinese 11.4%
- Black 8.4%
- Filipino: 4.1%
- Latin American 2.6%

CCAS Context

CCAS is one of 52 child welfare agencies in Ontario. According to 2008 – 2009 Service Statistics the number of children served totaled 22,252 including those at home and in care. This number represents 8,614 families served.

Investigations

Non-protection Investigations: 2,976

Protection Investigations: 3,533

Staff

CCAS has 565 full time staff (December 2007)

Age Ranges

- 30 or under 13.9%
- 30 to 40 32%
- 40 and over 53%
- Average Age 42

30% Visible Minorities

84% female, 15% male

Mission Statement of CCAS

For the love of children: The Catholic Children's Aid Society on behalf of the Catholic community is committed to provide social services that protect children and strengthen family life.

We value:

Human Dignity
The Courage and Integrity to Take a Stand
Partnership and Teamwork
Cultural, Racial and Individual Differences
Professional Excellence

Pastoral Consultant Job Description

Working with an interfaith staff, the PC assists the CCAS, a Catholic child welfare agency, to provide services in a manner that is consistent with a Catholic faith and values. The PC provides educational workshops, pastoral care and serves as a liaison with the Catholic community. She is chairperson of the Pastoral Support Team, an interfaith group of staff committed to deepening appreciation and understanding of spirituality in the workplace.

The Pastoral Support Team – July 2005

What is it?

The Pastoral Support Group is a team which will assist the PC to draw on the spiritual resources of Catholic and other Faith traditions in order to encourage, inspire and support our staff and to support our mission at CCAS. We wish to deepen our understanding of the unique spiritual issues that arise in child welfare. We also wish to find a means to share the spiritual riches that inspire our staff in this work. We hope to deepen our understanding of the spiritual side of life, and to share what gives up hope.

We would like to sponsor activities within the agency, such as discussions, brown bag lunches, speakers, special events or rituals. We will work together as a team to determine the types of activities given our Catholic heritage and identity within a multi-faith community. Our activities must support our mission statement and be consistent with Catholic values and principles.

Who are we?

8 team members

Representative from different location and service functions as well as religious diversity
Membership is voluntary and candidates should have at least two years work experience in a child welfare organization

Interest in spiritual/religious aspect of life and its relationship to the work of child welfare
Demonstrate that you are open and tolerant of spiritual and religious diversity

Expectations of Team Members

Initial two-year commitment (one deacon on staff on a consulting basis)

Supervisory approval

Sign a statement of confidentiality

Applicants to submit a covering letter addressing interest and any experience/training

Two references; include your immediate supervisor and a colleague

Monthly meetings estimated to be 2 – 4 hours as well as selected projects

Sign “Conditions of Acceptance” (6 statements e.g. membership is voluntary, not provide religious or spiritual counseling or direction, give one months notice if resigning)

Orientation for Members February 2006

Code of Conduct

In our work together we will:

1. Honour all perspectives
2. Respect Others
3. Honour diversity
4. Confidentiality
5. Active Listening
6. Commitment
7. Start and end on time
8. Humour
9. Speak Authentically

The Vision Statement of the Pastoral Support Team

In support of CCAS staff, foster caregivers, volunteers and the community we serve, the Pastoral Support Team will promote an environment that will keep our spirit alive by fostering the recognition and celebration of faith and spirituality in their diversity.

The Mission Statement of the Pastoral Support Team

The Mission of the Pastoral Support Team is to provide opportunities that will inspire our staff, foster caregivers, and volunteers to strengthen their faith and spirituality in order to deepen our sense of meaning and hope in the work of child welfare.

We are committed to:

- encouraging reflection, open dialogue and action
- respecting diverse beliefs and faiths
- leading by example
- listening to staff and obtaining feedback

Reflections

A thought provoking written piece (poem, news article, memoir about a person) presented at each meeting for the purpose of “digging deeper” into our spirituality and work.

Projects completed

- Bookmark – St. Vincent de Paul – Honouring the Spirit
- Bereavement Material; creating a Website and E-newsletter (in process) to include leave entitlement, coping, reintegration to work, cultural aspects of death and grief etc.
- Spiritual Care Packages: 25 Spiritual care packages for youth in care including a New Testament, journal, pen, gift card and a book enclosed in a small bag
- Minutes of PST meetings available on line for staff
- Picture of St. Vincent de Paul icon at Central Branch; cake in all the branches to celebrate spirit of St. Vincent de Paul
- Sock & slipper drive in honour of St. Vincent de Paul during Thanksgiving
- 2008 and 2009: Clothing drive 100 bags of clothing collected from staff donations
- February 14, 2009 Food Drive; collected 200 lbs. of food
- Christmas: Central branch Advent prayer 1x a week and email
- Black History Month – Word of Spirit emails – Women of Destiny (gospel singers)
- World Religions course
- Lunch and Learns: Introduction to Meditation (34 attendees over 3 sessions), Beatles & Spirituality “Here, There and Everywhere” “Unlock your Spirit, the Power of Full Engagement”, based on book by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

Brainstorming: Project Ideas

- Increase visibility: posters, Branch visits, resources
- Training: to see PS work from the perspective of spirit
- Invite team discussions: where do you get your inner strength?
- Symbols/Inspirational sayings
- Booklets in branches, pictures etc. to support spirituality
- Crisis Support Group; small group of staff available to consult with individual staff when a work related crisis occurs
- “Calling in” resources, internal or external speakers
- Develop email, Words of Spirit, inspirational items
- Develop a PST website, referral information etc.
- Develop resources for staff – trauma on caseload
- Develop resources or staff assistance for bereavement, loss, illness
- Discuss Ritual e.g. for major religious events or major events in community e.g. 9/11
- Commencement Packages
- Social Justice activities
- Environmental issues
- Mass for staff
- Chicken Soup for the Child Welfare Worker
- Spiritual Wellness Day
- Spirituality at the Movies
- Lunch and Learn: Spirituality at Work, Eat, Pray and Love
- Meditation room at each branch
- Letter to new staff from PST; welcoming and introduction

Evaluation

Logic Model used to measure our effectiveness: short term and long term outcomes after 2 years

Goals and Outcomes of PST

Demonstrate love: people will ask how you do your job; you have the opportunity to speak of faith “have to win hearts”

Child Protection Workers speaking with clients about faith walk and PST talking with staff about faith journey

PST members can be a bridge (bottom to top in the organization) to practice “spiritual beings”

Where We Are Going?

- Growing: more members added
- More visibility: PC visiting the branches in Fall 2009, Staff newsletter,
- Focus on Change: re-structuring due to deficits; welcoming committee, booklet with area facilities; sub-committee to collect resources on coping with change
- Prayer 1x a week during lunch hour at branch
- Music group formed after Beatles lunch and learn.

Challenges

1. Mass during Social Work week; not inclusive of all faiths: we are a working community, not a worshipping community
2. Budget and Time Limitations: e.g. Spiritual care packages for youth, visual aids
3. Secularism: Happy Holiday vs. Merry Christmas: naming and celebrating our diversity
4. How do we live out our faith and values during difficult times e.g. an apprehension or changes in staffing.
5. Religion/Spirituality are uncomfortable to discuss in the workplace – survey of team; if staff cannot discuss it amongst ourselves, how can we raise it with our clients?
6. Catholic identity – symbols lead to core values – what symbols does CCAS have visible – values underlying these and how we live them out – what motivates staff