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Batshaw Centres Clinical Integration Group on Sexual Abuse

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INTRODUCTION

The Clinical Integration Group (CIG) on child sexual abuse was established in 2006 as part of the SSHRC-funded Evidence-Based Management project between the McGill Centre for Research on Children and Families and Batshaw Centres. The overall purpose of the CIG is to promote within Batshaw Centres the development and integration of knowledge into clinical practice by using three forms of knowledge or evidence: research, clinical expertise, and data from Batshaw information systems. The CIG encompasses these forms of knowledge by accessing and reviewing relevant published research and literature, drawing on the experience and knowledge of practitioners, and by reviewing agency and publically available data. Central to the function of the CIGs is the selection of relevant research findings and practitioners' appraisal of their applicability.

IN CONTEXT

On a bi-monthly basis the CIG brings together approximately 20 individuals who have an interest and/or expertise in the important area of child sexual abuse, who wish to further their professional development, and to contribute to the integration of knowledge into practice. While the majority of members work at various points of service across Batshaw, there is member representation from the community, including McGill University, l'Université de Montréal, and the Montreal Children's Hospital. A McGill-affiliated researcher acts as a 'knowledge broker' for the group, and a graduate student provides support for the group's activities. The group is led by two co-chairs (one from Batshaw and one from McGill) and is overseen by a Batshaw coordinator, who acts as a liaison with other managers and is responsible for the identification and selection of participants as well as the overall group operations.

Over the past two years the group has reviewed literature on a variety of topics, including the abuse disclosure process, interviewing children, the judicial process, sibling abuse, issues among children and youth in care, offender preferences, and online child sexual exploitation. Major goals for the upcoming year include analyzing data regarding 'risk' cases of sexual abuse (under Quebec Youth Protection law) and developing clinical practice guidelines for intervening in cases of sexual abuse.

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OUTCOMES

The CIG has produced a number of quality outcomes and products over the years, including:

- the review and critical appraisal of over 50 journal articles and book chapters to determine the relevance and potential impact on clinical practice;
- the production and dissemination of clinical summaries that highlight key elements of research articles and implications for practice, with the goal of facilitating the transfer of 'consumable' knowledge within the CIG as well as to other staff;
- the creation of a section of the Batshaw library dedicated to all CIG readings and summaries;
- the development of a regularly updated, comprehensive manual of relevant sexual abuse resources within and external to Batshaw to help meet the needs of the clients and/or to support clinical staff;
- the provision of a case consultation services to workers and supervisors across Batshaw Centres by four senior members of the CIG;
- workshops by internationally renowned experts in sexual abuse and sexual exploitation;
- support for the creation of groups for adolescent victims of sexual abuse;
- groups on healthy sexual behaviour for pre-adolescents in group care;
- contribution to Guidelines for the Sexual Exploitation of Adolescents
- contribution to Guidelines for the Sharing of Information with Caregivers in Cases of Sexual Abuse (September 2009), the need for which arose out of discussions at the CIG;
- annual 2-day trainings led by CIG members with updated curriculum regarding sexual abuse intervention and treatment planning for front-line practitioners;
- the provision of input on research and staff development activities and curricula when requested.

Other less tangible outcomes of the CIG include: discussions regarding evidence-based and best or promising practices between colleagues, increased levels of confidence for clinicians dealing with cases, evolving clinical practices, and ultimately the provision of more effective services to children and families. While operating the CIGs can at times be challenging in an agency with high service demands, support from a number of individuals at Batshaw Centres and McGill University has lent credibility to this important initiative.

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ON THE RADAR is a dissemination initiative from the Centre for Research on Children and Families that promotes its members' research work.



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