



REPORT 2022-23

Submitted to: Johnny's Heart of Gold

Quarterly Report: January 1 - March 31, 2023

1. PARENT PEER SUPPORT

Parent Peer Support Workers use their own lived experience to offer support, resources and information, system navigation, education and mentoring to other families.

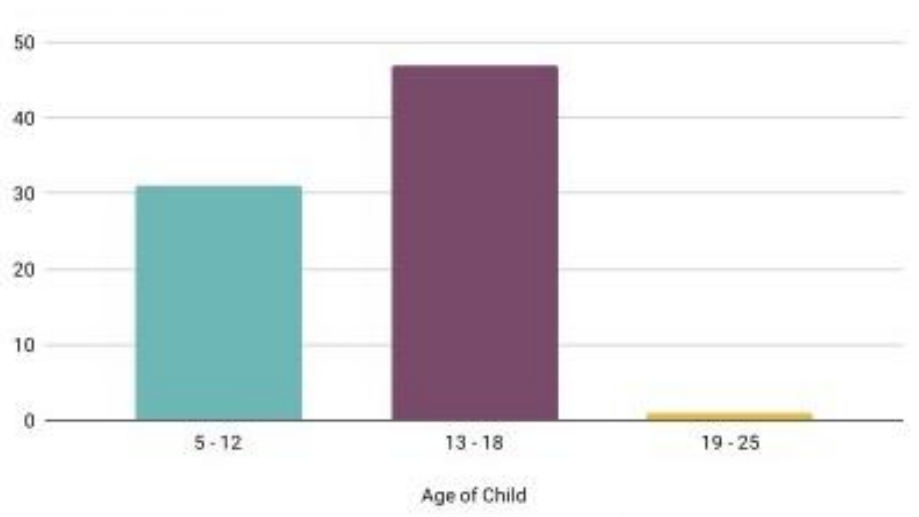
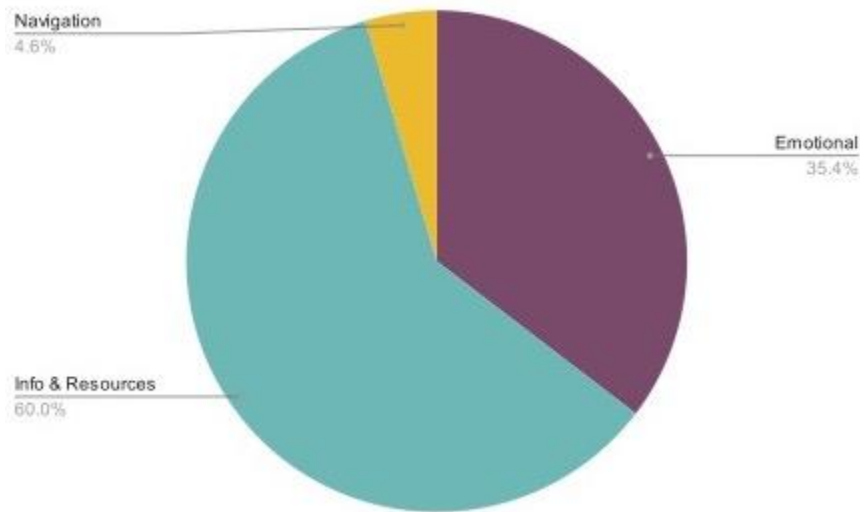
1.A Parent Peer Support at START North

Short Term Assessment Response Treatment (START) provides confidential mental health crisis intervention services for children and teens (6 to 18 yrs) who are experiencing the rapid onset (in the past 2-4 weeks) of extreme mental health symptoms resulting in the child/teen being unable to participate in their typical daily activities or relationships. Mental health crisis may include: self-harming, suicidal thoughts or attempts, intense anxiety or depression, distorted thinking, or high risk of significantly harming others.

Johnny's Heart of Gold Funds: Parent Peer Support 2 Days Per Week at START North.

Between January 1, 2023 to March 31, 2023, **79** parents and caregivers with a youth in crisis were supported by a Parent Peer Support Worker at START North.

Types of Support Provided to START families this quarter:



Reflections from the Parent Peer Support Worker serving families at START North:

"The thing that stands out...perhaps something that reflects what we do as FamilySmart - we offer hope. Recently, I asked a parent, who was feeling pretty desperate, what they needed most right now and their answer was "I'm talking to a lot of doctors, counselors etc but what I need is to talk to another parent and see if they can give me some hope." We talked and her email later that evening simply said, **"Thank you for giving me hope"** - and she booked another call the following week in which she was doing much better thanks to her youth having a good meeting with the START clinician and our conversation. So encouraging to be reminded so clearly that what we do makes a difference." -Sarah, Parent Peer Support Worker, START North

1.B Parent Peer Support at Fraser Health's Youth Concurrent Disorder (YCD) Program:

Fraser Health Regional Youth Concurrent Disorder (YCD) team provides specialized mental health and substance use services to youth and young adults (13-24) in the Fraser region experiencing persistent and recurrent patterns or cyclic history of substance use and misuse; patterns of mental health dysregulation; difficulty managing mental health and substance use where there is interference with daily life that harms health, relationships, finances, or leads to legal problems; recent opioid overdose with a history of multiple overdoses; multiple hospital presentations with mental health and/or substance use related symptoms; a history of accessing services with failed connections to various services; and acute withdrawal symptoms.

Johnny's Heart of Gold Funds: Parent Peer Support 2 Days Per Week at the Youth Concurrent Disorder Program.

January - February 2023

Parent Peer Support Worker for YCD begins orientation and complete's FamilySmart's Parent Peer Support Training.

March 2023

Parent Peer Support Worker and Manager, Peer Support Program met with lead YCD therapist to collaborate on identifying the first steps for implementing Parent Peer Support with families alongside the work of the YCD clinicians with youth; confirming the referral process and pathways for parents and caregivers to reach the PPSW and solidifying schedules. Parent Peer Support Worker begins supporting families with youth accessing services at YCD.

Next steps

- Starting the week of May 1, 2023, the Parent Peer Support Worker will host weekly virtual drop-in meet and greet sessions on Tuesdays from 12 - 12:30 pm. These sessions will provide an opportunity for any parent or caring adult with a youth accessing services through YCD to meet the Parent Peer Support Worker, hear a little bit about how we can help, how we can connect and how to reach the Parent Peer Support Worker for 1:1 support.
- The Parent Peer Support Workers for START and YCD present to partner community organizations supporting youth and families struggling with substance use and emerging crises.

Reflections from the Parent Peer Support Worker serving families at the Youth Concurrent Disorders Program

"In my role as a Parent Peer Support Worker with FamilySmart and the Youth Concurrent Disorders team, I am grateful to perhaps be a small part of the change that I would like to see in the world. During my time on this planet I have seen some things, made some mistakes, and learned some hard lessons. I believe those lessons have brought wisdom and with wisdom I am starting to find my voice.

Addiction is a peculiar thing. Sadly, it is all around us, sometimes it shows up like a tsunami but often it initially shows up more like a quiet storm, often hiding in plain sight. About eight years ago I decided I needed to better understand the biology of addiction and enrolled in a college program so I could better understand what I was seeing, specifically as my teenage son found himself with an opioid dependency. Quickly, we were in the eye of the storm and little did we know that we were in for the fight of our lives.

This was back in the very early days just as fentanyl was being identified and my son was one of the first to be intertwined in this particular toxic drug supply, at least in our community. I reached out for help and I was devastated to find myself completely alone. I had no idea how to navigate assistance. And no one understood what was happening for us.

Fast forward to my time working with FamilySmart as a Parent Peer Support Worker at the Youth Concurrent Disorder Program. I see glimpses of my former self in the parents that I meet. I too remember a time when I was confused about what I was seeing. Back in the time that my son told me everything was fine. Back when I determined things were not fine. Back before I could see the patterns of how substance use could unfold and the natural progression of addiction. Back when the shame I felt was overwhelming.

I am grateful that now I get the opportunity to share what I have learned, to hold space for other parents facing a similar journey. This role offers parents whose kids are struggling with substance use the opportunity to discuss what is happening for them without judgment by someone who has also lived this life. My hope is that they feel like someone else understands, and that they know they are not alone." - Cherie, Parent Peer Support Worker, YCD

2. OUTREACH IN THE TRI CITIES

Throughout the quarter, FamilySmart connected with families, carers and service providers in the Tri Cities by hosting resource tables and/or presenting at the following events:

January 17 - Kids Health Fair for the TriCities; joint presentation with Kinsight and School District #43 on Mental health Support Resources for Families

April 4 - FamilySmart In-Person Event with Nicole Allen, RCC "Caregivers as Critical Agents of Change: Strategies to keep in mind when your young person struggles with emotional dysregulation."