



**Program for Children and Youth
Experiencing Violence**

Prevention, Education, Advocacy,
Counselling and Empowerment

The PEACE Program's Psycho-educational Mandate

The **Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE)** Program for Children and Youth Experiencing Violence, formerly the Children Who Witness Abuse Program is a free community- based support program for children and youth between the ages of 3-18. In 2017, there are 86 programs across BC.

The PEACE program uses psycho-educational methods in both group and individual support settings. Psycho-education is an important part of working with children and youth with experiences of violence. Living in the context of violence can result in impacts which contribute to how a child or youth perceives and understands their experience.

The Program assists children, youth and their mothers to learn skills to cope with their experiences of violence. The Program's goals are to provide participants with a safe, welcoming, and supportive setting to discuss their experiences, the impacts, and to learn to manage their responses. A psycho-educational program is a broad theoretical framework of support that empowers the program participant, and that promotes resilience and attitudinal and behavioural change.

PEACE Program counsellors employ psycho-educational methods to help increase a participant's ability to understand their experiences of violence, and adapt to them. This helps program participants reduce the impacts, and alleviate the potential for social or behavioural challenges arising from experiencing violence. Research shows that psycho-education can benefit an individual's mental state and functioning; enhance their skills for keeping themselves safe; reduce feelings of shame; improve self-esteem; and improve family relationships.^{i,ii,iii}

In a psycho-educational program, the locus of change is within the program participant; the PEACE program counsellor empowers the program participant through information and strategies. This can be accomplished in both group and individual settings.

The PEACE Program counsellor empowers children and youth through psycho-education, by:

- Providing accurate information that helps program participants better understand their experiences and the impacts of experiencing violence.
- Providing reassurance.
- Helping program participants explore their feelings (e.g. grief, anger, loss).
- Providing emotional support.
- Setting, and teaching, boundaries.
- Fostering and acknowledging resilience.



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- Assisting with goal setting.
- Teaching skills, such as grounding skills and safety planning.
- Challenging thinking patterns.
- Sharing family stories.
- Exploring, acknowledging, and validating their responses to violence.
- Providing opportunities for social interaction with safe adults and peers.

PEACE Program counsellors explore these topics and engage program participants using developmentally appropriate methods (e.g., art, play, story-telling, use of multi-media).

If you would like to learn more about the PEACE program, please contact The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) which provides support to the PEACE programs at info@bcsth.ca or your local PEACE Counsellor at:

ⁱ Pharoah, F., Mari, J., Rathbone, J., & Wong, W. (2010). Family intervention for schizophrenia: 2010 update. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2006(4).

ⁱⁱ Reyes, C. (2010). What is psycho-education? Psycho-educational teacher for students with behavioral issues. Retrieved from <http://thepsychoeducationalteacher.blogspot.ca/2010/10/what-is-psycho-education.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Sudermann, M., Marshall, L., & Loosely, S. (2000). Evaluation of the London (Ontario) Community Group Treatment Programme for Children Who Have Witnessed Woman Abuse. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 3:1, 127–146.