



Social Return On Investment (SROI) Case Study: Eastside Family Centre

Fast Facts:

Woods Homes is a nationally accredited children's mental health centre offering a range of treatment services for children, youth and their families.

Our clients range from children with problems requiring simple remedies to more severe, chronic and complex issues. Our community mental-health and children's services offer day treatment, crisis counseling, residential and education services.

- Wood's Homes, a large organization with about 220 full-time staff and primarily funded by Calgary and Area Child & Family Services and the Alberta Health Services-Calgary Health Region, focuses on youth 11 to 18.
- Woods Homes operates 21 programs focused on care, treatment and education.
- Wood's works with other agencies and community resources to support more than 400 youth and their families each day.
- Of the 82 children supported by the Eastside Family Center in 2007-2008, 36% were either 5 or 6 years old and 64% were 7 to 12 years old.

Funders:

- Calgary & Area Child and Family Services;
- Alberta Health Services-Calgary Health Region;
- Calgary Board of Education;
- Calgary Catholic School Division;
- City of Calgary (FCSS);
- United Way.

www.woodhomes.ca

Having a counselor at our school allows us to work proactively with children and families before issues escalate into a crisis. Having the counselor available in the school makes her part of the school community. She is visible to the children and available to the parents within a trusting environment resulting in parents being more willing to participate in helping their child. The counselor also helps students and families remove the negative stigma of requesting mental health services. - Principal

Program Background:

The Woods Homes Eastside Family Centre ensures that qualified mental health clinicians are available to three elementary schools in Calgary, within an area of the city that is known to house a large number of at-risk, high-need families.

On average, the Eastside Family Centre supports 10% of a total of 860 children enrolled across three schools.

The families of children attending schools designated as high need are typically struggling with poverty, family breakdown and violence. Many are new to Calgary and to Canada. There are often underlying mental health concerns affecting the parents.

As a result, the children are also under a severe degree of stress. They develop behaviours that interfere with their ability to learn and negatively impact their social interactions. The Eastside Family Centre offers one-on-one support for children and their parents, in order to assist the family to resolve the situation that is generating stresses upon the child.

Social Value Created:

The Eastside Family Centre creates social value via interventions that assist children to develop coping skills when their family situation might be in transition or has been altered as a result of separation, divorce, sickness or death.

Without this support, children will often behave inappropriately, present themselves with anger or begin to withdraw from their family

members and from their school community. A child that is not communicating with family can start to cause severe disruptions at home, which can cause their parent to miss work. Often, parents will take their child to a walk-in clinic in the hope that a doctor will be able to diagnose and treat the problem.

Theory of Change

If the parents of children struggling at school as a result of emotional stress at home, have support and counseling to rectify the issue causing the stress, their child will be better able to succeed at school, and more significant emotional, developmental and scholastic problems will be prevented.

Increased stress at home increases the risk of family violence, which may require intervention by social services and increase the likelihood of a child being moved into foster care. If disruptions at school continue, a child may be moved to a

special classroom.

The Eastside Family Center helps families to identify and then to address significant family stresses. This approach prevents problems from becoming extreme, therefore from requiring more intensive intervention from child welfare, special education class time and often more expensive interventions through the healthcare system.

Parents are supported to improve their parenting and coping skills. They are connected to community resources geared to stabilizing and improving their circumstances. These changes will have an important and positive impact on their children.

Children are supported as they learn to manage their stress while at school. This improves their social skills and their ability to interact positively with teachers and peers at school.

The Eastside Family Center offers timely, accessible, cost-effective and preventative services. The annual social value ratio resulting from the work of the Center is **1 to 6.74**.

For more information on SROI, visit www.simpactstrategies.com

Clientele:

The children referred to the Center are between 7–12 years old. Their families are often single-parent or blended families that are experiencing some degree of family discord. There is usually more than one child in the family.

All parents report significant stress related to the behaviour of their children. Many have been forced to reduce their hours at work, or to remove themselves from employment altogether, as a result of the child's behaviour.

Almost all families have utilized the emergency services at the Alberta Children's Hospital, seeking solutions to their children's behaviour. 50% of families are known to child welfare due to concerns about their children. Additional challenges being faced by parents include poverty, addictions and mental health concerns.

Case Studies - Eastside Family Center

A single mother of 2 children was struggling with parenting, as she upgraded her education and was integrating a new partner into her home. Her nine year old son was becoming prone to emotional outbursts that resulted in calls to the police and child welfare.

Eastside supported both mother and child as he lived in foster care for a short time. His mother learned new parenting skills and became confident setting boundaries with consequences. His teachers were taught to support him to manage his anger or stress in the classroom. Together, the family had counseling in order to successfully adjust to the new adult in the home.

Today, this boy is fully integrated into a regular classroom. He has few outbursts. He and his mother have new tools to manage their relationship. The family reports improved communication and successful problem solving .

A six year old girl was suffering from anxiety such that she had difficulty getting to school and staying at school for the school day. She was withdrawn from her peers, isolated on the playground and in the classroom and unable to focus on her work. Eastside discovered that her father had recently left the family, her mother

had moved the family in with her sister and had started a new relationship.

The Eastside counselors worked with the mother on creating stability and structure within the new home setting. This included spending time with her daughter as reassurance that the mother would not also disappear.

Her teacher was supported in helping this girl manage her anxiety at school. Within one month, the child had settled in class, made friends and the family environment had stabilized.

An eight year old boy and his younger sister were placed in the care of their father, whom they had not seen since the boy was two. While living with his mother, he had been exposed to drug use and was left to parent his younger sister.

The move to a new home and a new school was very difficult. The boy was defiant, rude, aggressive and uncooperative. Through Eastside, the children were coached within the school setting to help others see them as the good kids that they were. At home, the family was coached to acknowledge the changes experienced, their loss and the upsets of family breakdown and significant difficulties.

Both children came to understand how their behaviour impacted their family and classroom. They achieved more at school, were able to settle at home and to reduce the family's need for social services.

Conclusion

Wood's Homes Eastside Family Centre plays an important role in the day-to-day life of the three schools involved. As a counselor is regularly on-site, the children are familiar with the Eastside Clinic, which builds trust more quickly.

Disruptive classroom behaviour often reflects problems at home. By addressing both cause and effect, the child and family can be stabilized. This leads to greater success for the child at school and increases the likelihood of long-term stability for the family.

Table 1: Annual Social Value Create: Eastside Family Centre

Annual Social Value Created - WOOD's Homes					
SROI Indicators Included:	\$\$ value per change in year 1	% of co-hort experiencing change	\$\$ value of change	Explanatory Notes	Indicator Code
1 Foster care avoided (minimum of 6 weeks)	\$2,376	30.0%	\$58,450	30% of 82 children would otherwise have gone into care.	CSP
2 Reduced need for emergency ward @ hospital (+overnight)	\$1,269	3.6%	\$3,746	3 of 82 children would have otherwise been admitted to emergency and kept overnight.	H4 & H1
3 Reduced need for EMS & police call-outs	\$1,288	2.4%	\$2,535	EMS and the police would have been called out for 2 children, twice each year.	CSP
4 No need for child to be educated in special classroom	\$36,860	12.0%	\$362,702	at least 10 children would otherwise have been enrolled in special needs classrooms.	E2
5 Reduced use of walk-in clinics	\$75	20.0%	\$1,228	estimated 3 visit per year (\$24 ea.) by 16 families.	H2
6 Reduced income due to absenteeism from work	\$19,200	7.0%	\$110,208	income no longer lost as a result of absenteeism due to child's circumstances	CSP
SOCIAL VALUE CREATED:			YR 1		
Social value created annually for co-hort:			\$538,868		
Total annual investment in co-hort:			\$80,000		
Annual SROI ratio			6.74		