



# CLEAR DIRECTIONS SUBSTANCE USE DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM



Clear Directions

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND CAREGIVERS

'I need  
space  
to  
think'



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## INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Clear Directions (CD) operates as a partnership between the Breakaway, George Hull Centre, and the Toronto District School Board. Clear Directions is based in a classroom at the school building of the Thistleton Regional Centre in Rexdale, North Etobicoke. We offer services to youth 14-18 who live in the Greater Toronto Area (Toronto, Peel, Halton, and Durham Regions). Students attend class from Monday to Friday 9:15am to 3:00pm (Tuesdays to 12:30pm), and receive academic, therapeutic, and substance use related support from our teacher, youth workers, and clinician. CD also offers psychiatric support provided by our consulting psychiatrist.

### **Why could Clear Directions be useful to me?**

The Clear Directions Substance Use Day Treatment Program helps youths who are struggling with substance use and other mental health problems. In an atmosphere of support and acceptance, students have the opportunity to attend school and earn credits. At the same time, youths and their families can work on their relationships through family therapy. Often, with their substance use problems under control, credits on their report cards, and better communication at home, many students return to regular schools with the strength to stick to their goals, and the confidence to succeed.

### **Harm Reduction**

Harm Reduction means reducing the harm that substance use causes in people's lives. At Clear Directions, Harm Reduction also means that we respect and support the substance related goals that our students set for themselves. For some, this may mean abstaining from drug use altogether, for others, it may involve using less harmful substances in less harmful ways.

### **Confidentiality**

At Clear Directions, any information about you and your family will only be shared among the members of the professional team here at CD and the George Hull Centre. If we wish to consult an outside professional for advice, we require your and your family's written permission.

In order to help you with your substance use goals, we do not share information about your substance use with your parents / caregivers, or anyone else, including probation officers and police. There are exceptions to our confidentiality protocol: If your substance use puts your or someone else's life or well-being at serious risk, we will share as much information as necessary with your parents / caregivers or other adults in order to keep you and others safe. In such an event, we would let you know about our decision to not keep information confidential. Similarly, if we became aware of activities or circumstances that could put you or others at serious risk, we would share information with your parents / caregivers or other adults in order to keep you and others safe.

### **Length of Stay**

Clear Directions is a voluntary program. Students can decide to leave the program at any time. Typically, students remain with us for approximately one school year, and sometimes longer. Most of our students eventually return to community schools.

### **Monitoring Progress**

Students who enter Clear Directions have a review after 30 days of attending the program. Similar meetings take place every three months after this initial review. The purpose of these 'Plan of Care' meetings is to review if the program is indeed meeting your needs. Plan of Care meetings usually include you, your parents / caregivers, your teacher, your youth worker, and your CD clinician. In addition to these more formal reviews, you will frequently meet with your teacher, youth worker, and clinician informally to see how things are going for you.

### **Rules / responsibilities at CD**

Staff and students together develop a 'classroom protocol' for Clear Directions that specifies rules about use of electronics, dress code, break times, etc. We invite you to look at the current rules during your first tour of the program. Some rules that never change are:

1. We expect everyone to treat all students and staff with respect at all times. Discriminatory or racist language, jokes, or comments will not be tolerated.
2. We expect everyone to help people of all races, sexual orientations, gender identities, religions, and mental health symptoms to feel welcomed at Clear Directions.
3. Substance use is not permitted during school time. Students who might not yet be able to move through a whole school day without using substances, can consider part-time attendance.

### **Role of the Youth Workers**

The youth workers (*a.k.a. CYW's or child and youth workers*) support the students in many different ways. In the classroom, they support the students academically by working with the teacher and helping to work through more complex tasks. The youth workers also ensure that the students feel welcome, accepted, and comfortable in the program. The youth workers invite students to talk about any issues, concerns, and worries they might have inside or outside of the program, and they encourage the students to stick to their substance use goals, and to

any other goals they might have set for themselves. A part of the role of the youth workers includes the maintenance of a positive working environment in the classroom, and adherence to the classroom protocol and rules of behaviour. The youth workers also organize and lead special class trips to theatrical performances, museums, and other community resources. As 'primary workers', the youth workers ensure that the student's progress is monitored through 'plan of care meetings', that the parents /caregivers are included in any planning, and that the student's clinical files are organized and useful.

### **Role of the Clinician**

The role of the Clear Directions Clinician is to connect with students through individual, group, and family therapy and work on treatment goals created by the student, family, and clinician. A treatment goal is created so that the student and family have an idea of what they are working towards and when their hopes and wishes are achieved. Goals are based on what the student and family would like different in their lives. For example, a goal may be improving communication among family members or family members learning different ways of managing their anger. Therefore, family therapy involves discussion and problem-solving sessions with the family. It is important that the family participate in family sessions while their child is in the Clear Directions program.

It is the clinician's job to create an environment that feels safe and comfortable for the student and his or her family to talk open and honestly. The clinician will explain the rules of confidentiality in the first meeting (for example what information will stay confidential and what will be shared with others).

A student and his or her family typically meets with the clinician on a weekly basis in the school or at the George Hull Centre located at 600 East Mall. Depending on the circumstances, at times the clinician will meet with the student and family in the community. The Clear Directions clinician will determine with each student, on an individual basis, where they will meet and how often they will meet.

In addition to counselling, the Clear Directions Clinician will act as a case manager (i.e. help student find housing, job, other community programs), an advocate (i.e. help student get his or her needs and rights met), as well as a liaison (i.e. keep communication open between former school and other community agencies involved with family), for each student within the Clear Directions program as well as in the community.

### **Parental / Caregiver Involvement**

Parental /Caregiver involvement is a crucial component in the progress and success of students at Clear Directions. Parents / Caregivers are involved in their child's treatment in the following ways:

- Family sessions
- Plan of Care meetings are initially held after 30 days and then held every 3 months
- Telephone support and consultation
- Couple counselling if requested

## **Family Therapy**

Family therapy is a type of counseling in which a whole family or part of a family meet with a therapist to identify and understand family patterns and to learn how to break unhealthy habits. Family relationships are seen to be an important factor in people's mental health. Therefore, family therapy can be helpful if a family is having problems getting along or if there are unhealthy or negative relationships within the family.

It is important to note that the term 'family' can be defined in numerous different ways. At Clear Directions, if a person is important to you, he / she is important to us and could certainly be included in 'family' therapy.

## **Individual Therapy**

Most students have individual goals in addition to their family goals (example: substance use related goals). In addition to participating in family therapy, Clear Directions students are also expected to meet with the Clear Directions clinician individually. The length and frequency of these 'individual sessions' depend on the student's needs.

## **Contact us**

*Breakaway also offers substance use prevention and information workshops to schools, community groups, parents, and professionals. Please contact Anne Taylor for more details and to book a presentation.*



**Intake Worker:** Anne, Breakaway: 416-234-1942