



EFAN

FASD - Frontline

Youth and Homelessness

April 2015

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Easter Holidays is upon us! Make the most of it. Here are some Easter family fun activities for the whole family!

- 1. Beautiful Bunny Contest:** Everyone draws their own version of the Easter Bunny. Hang them up for decoration and, if you wish, have a Beauty Contest. Recognize the most creative, prettiest, funniest, etc.
- 2. Word Find:** Take an Easter related word such as: Basket, Chocolate, Bunnies, etc. and find as many little words as possible before the timer runs out. Example: EASTER...eat, east, sat, tea, rest, rat, tear
- 3. Hot Boiled Egg:** This game is a variation of Hot Potato, which is a variation of musical chairs. Fill a plastic egg with something to give it a little weight. Tape it closed very securely. Players sit or stand in a circle. When the music starts, the players pass the "hot boiled egg" around the circle. When the music stops, the person left holding the egg is out. Play continues until only one person is left, and that person is the winner.
- 4. Find your Egg-Match** Cut paper eggs in half either in different angles, or with decorative large cutting scissors. Hand out the eggs and have the players find their egg-match! This game is better to play when you have a large group, like on Easter day. If you are playing with a small group, tape the second half of eggs around the house and have your family search for their match

Edmonton and Area Fetal Alcohol (EFAN) Frontline Newsletter contains information regarding resources, services, articles, research and any other materials that might inform and provide support to frontline workers and caregivers. If you wish to share information or to be added to our e-list subscription, please contact edmontonefan@gmail.com

FASD Success Story—Agencies Collaboration

By: FASD Program in Edmonton

Two agencies working together to support a PCAP participant and her partner creating an outcome that was unexpected by other supports. It demonstrates how important it can be, to provide supports to the whole family.

This particular family has experienced CFS (Children and Family Services) involvement with different members and possibly generational. This couple had continued to meet and consistently complete tasks set in collaboration with their supports. They would experience barriers that impeded progress yet kept with the program and accepted their circumstances, thus continuing to show their resolve and acceptance of the support offered. Without the details of the story it is particularly poignant for this family, as there has been a significant involvement with CFAS that included previous generations.

It was observed, when the child was returned to this couple, that this was a new outcome for the family and demonstrated how well placed supports are so important. It reflected the collaboration, supports and the efforts put forward by everyone involved.

Father Friendly?

By Paul Pringle

One night a father overheard his son pray: Dear God, Make me the kind of man my Daddy is. Later that night, the Father prayed, Dear God, Make me the kind of man my son wants me to be. **Anonymous**

It is astonishing the impact on a family when fathers are absent from the home. Statistics show that married-couple family's have a 12 per cent chance of living in poverty where as a single parent family has a 44 per cent chance of living in poverty. Notwithstanding the effects of poverty on individuals and families, the absence of a father increases the rate of incarceration, substance abuse, runaway behaviour, socio-emotional and academic functioning. Presenting these stats is not to suggest a cause and effect rather the importance of relationship and support. Absence does not make the heart fonder, rather it leaves questions and challenges that might be circumvented.



How do we support, engage, and invite fathers to the table? We need to consider that the involvement of dad, can have a positive impact, whether they live in their children's home or away. I recently came across an agency called the Alberta Father Involvement Initiative (AFII). "AFII encourages the responsible involvement of fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, and any other man who is influencing a child." I was immediately intrigued when I spoke with Patrick Dillion the Provincial Co-ordinator of AFII, as this organization explores the question, "Is your agency Father Friendly?". It is a question I never considered in my work experience and would like to know about the subtleties and obvious detractors to Fathers connecting with supports. Better yet, how to be more inviting to Fathers. He will be sharing the resources that are available for fathers, and how agencies can consider ways to involve fathers into their children's lives. "Committed to strong, healthy children by affirming and valuing the bond between fathers and their children, the AFII works to provide relevant and well-crafted information for fathers and for individuals, agencies, and programs working with fathers" (AFII Website, 2015). Patrick Dillion will be presenting on AFII at our next Frontline meeting, April 14, 9:00 a.m. Parkdale School Rm 6 | 1648 – 85 Street.



- 1. Attend to negative emotions /thoughts; don't repress them**
(Or they'll resurface in the future)
- 2. Take action on what's making you unhappy**
(Identify the source, Fix the issue, Let go of the rest)
- 3. Update your belief system**
(Dissolve beliefs making you unhappy)
- 4. See the positive vs. negative side of things**
(Always look for the silver lining)
- 5. Let go of expectations**
(and Focus on Intentions)
- 6. Be grateful for what you have** (For this is the start of more to come)
- 7. Think of your ideals vs. problems**
(What is your ideal vision?)
- 8. Live a purposeful life**
(Life begins by having a purpose, goals and dreams)
- 9. Recognize happiness is a choice** (You can either choose to sink in misery or be happy)
- 10. Don't think "What if", but "Next time"**



Almost inevitably, in conversations about youth homelessness, the question “how did they end up on the streets?” is closely followed by the concern “where do they end up?”

The answer to the first question is pretty straightforward – abusive, impoverished and unstable home lives for some, failed social safety nets for many, and for a minority, an impulsive decision to run away from a good home followed by, in many instances, life-ruining consequences.

The question of where they end up also has several answers. Sadly, the answer for some is an untimely death, as I mentioned in a recent Toronto Star editorial. The mortality rate among homeless youth is at least tenfold that of housed youth. Some end up homeless into adulthood.

Myself and a number of colleagues sought to spend a year with youth who had succeeded in overcoming the massive

hurdle of exiting homelessness. To do this work we partnered with a number of service agencies. In Toronto we worked with LOFT, Covenant House, Youthlink and SKETCH.

We learned a number of things in the year with these youth, one of which was that exiting the streets is a long and complicated process and a year is a relatively short time in that process. Here are some highlights:

- 24% lost stable housing in this period and cycled back into homelessness
- Youth existed on the tightest of margins, with a late paycheck or a fight with a roommate leading straight back into homelessness – here there were no safety nets
- In many cases, a period of initial excitement and optimism after finding housing gave way to a longer period of depression, worry, and isolation. The isolation came from youth breaking ties with old street-involved friends and being cut-off from their old social service supports by virtue of trying to avoid emergency shelter or drop-in locations
- Of particular concern to the youth were the limitations imposed by mental health problems and disabilities, deep poverty, limited work experience, limited education, and criminal records
- Trauma had a lasting impact on many youth. Many had been traumatized by experiences on and off the street including abandonment, victimization, and physical, emotional, and sexual abuse
- Youth benefited greatly from having a person in their life that they could trust and that they perceived as a source of unconditional love and support. Unfortunately many had no such person in their lives
- Supportive housing was linked with better outcomes
- The more protracted and complicated the process of exiting the streets, the poorer the outcomes.

The implications of this work are clear. Decent housing, while essential, is not enough. Our current system of services is overwhelmingly geared towards managing crises and obtaining housing – with little to offer once a youth is housed. Supports are needed to see through the tremendous efforts made by youth and the service agencies supporting them in obtaining housing.

Along with the loss of human potential and the individual tragedies of young people who have their enormous efforts to move on to a better life undone, there is a clear economic argument here. The analogy would be a hospital with an ER and an ICU but no other inpatient wards or rehabilitation services – our current service structure for homeless youth is incomplete.

Project Highlight

Bissell Centre—Free Diaper Program

Once per month, families in need of diapers can access Bissell Centre's available diapers. Those families will receive approximately one week's worth of diapers and formula. Subject to availability.

Call the Bissell Centre at 780 423-2285

April / May Upcoming Events

- EFAN Monthly Meeting—Apr 07, 2015—At DECSA
- Frontline Meeting—Apr 14, 2015—206 at Parkdale School —9: 00—11:00 a.m.
- Lakeland Training—New Canadian Assessment Guideline—April 24, 2015
- PCAP Council—Presenting Dr. Gabor Maté—Thursday, June 04, 2015

Ideas for Family Outings / Activities

- April 02, 2015—Come and See the Sun—UoA Observatory
- April 02, 2015—Views of the night Sky—UoA Observatory
- April 06, 2015—“Get Closer” this Easter at Edmonton Valley Zoo
- April 11, 2015—See a Live Owl—Wild Birds Unlimited

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**Edmonton and Area
Fetal Alcohol Network**

A future free of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

#2, 9137 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton AB, T5H 3T2

Edmontonefan@gmail.com
www.edmontonfetalalcoholnetwork.org



Vision: A future free of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

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