



The Hospitality and Sanctuary of Congregations in Meeting Mental Health Needs

Shalem also operates the innovative multifaith Hosting Program, in partnership with the International Institute for Restorative Practices Canada. With the Hosting Program, faith communities act as the “hosts” of Family Group Decision-Making meetings. When a child is about to become a permanent ward of the state, the entire extended family is pulled together to try to develop a plan of care for the child. If the plan meets the safety requirements of the Children’s Aid Society, it is adopted and the success rates are higher than any other intervention in child welfare.



Thanks to Shalem’s Hosting Program, more and more of these meetings are being held in faith community settings. Linking to faith community values of hospitality and sanctuary, and solving significant space barriers for holding these meetings effectively, faith communities are becoming hosts of reconciliation processes that are happening in their local communities.

Here is one example:

A single mother of three children who suffers from a mental illness was having difficulty getting up in the morning and making sure her children attended school and arrived on time. A Family Group Decision-Making meeting was held with the extended family to create a plan to support the mother in handling her daily responsibilities for her three

children. The resulting plan included family involvement and support for the mother. It had multiple components including daily wake-up calls, establishing regular routines, supporting social skills and utilizing community resources.

The three children are still living with their mother, attending school on a regular basis and no longer worrying about failing a grade or becoming foster children. The church provided an excellent setting for the conference with access to a number of rooms, privacy and a kitchen for lunch and snacks!

“In the last 3.5 years the Central East Region Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Service has completed over 400 ADRs. We have been lucky enough to use

a number of faith communities to host our Family Group Decision Making conferences. On behalf of all FGDM coordinators, Child Protection Mediators, CAS and the families involved with this service, we would like to thank you for the generosity of your congregation, the use of your facilities and your host volunteers.

Your faith community and facility have provided the perfect workplace for these families to help come together to make good plans for their family and help keep their children safe. It truly does make a difference!”

.....
Alison McElvey, MSW, RSW, Blue Hills Child and Family Centre (York Region)

The cost of restoring hope...

Churches pay between \$2,000 and \$4,000 for FaithCARE work—a real challenge, as churches do not typically budget for conflict. If your congregation is seeking to become a more vibrant community, please contact us! And please consider becoming a partner in this critical work through your financial support, so that churches are encouraged to build healthier relationships and

stronger communities, and no one in their congregations is left behind.

It costs Shalem \$10,000 each year to deliver the Hosting Program, \$5,000 each for the Central East and Central West regions of Ontario. Other regions are asking for the Hosting Program. Invite your own congregation to authorize the use of your facility as a host site for

the Hosting Program, and put us in touch. And please consider financially supporting this vital service, connecting faith communities with children and families seeking restoration.

Thanks to Shalem’s Hosting Program, more and more of these meetings are being held in faith community settings. Linking to faith community values of hospitality and sanctuary, and solving significant space barriers for holding these meetings effectively, faith communities are becoming hosts of the reconciliation processes that are happening in their local communities.