

New Research Shows Decreased Anxiety, Depression in Ontarians Receiving Psychotherapy from Family Service Ontario Agencies

Average client results indicate improvement from moderate to mild severity following short-term intervention

August 25, 2020 – TORONTO, ON – In first-of-their kind results in the province, data from the **Family Service Ontario Demonstration Project** show that average client anxiety and depression decreased from moderate to mild severity after receiving short-term psychotherapy from Family Service Ontario agencies. These results help position Family Service Ontario agencies as leaders in mental health service delivery and outcome measurement.

The design of the *Family Service Ontario Demonstration Project* complemented **the Ontario government's Increasing Access to Structured Psychotherapy (IASP)** project by using similar measures and timelines. Family Service Ontario's project produced comparable results to year one of the United Kingdom's *Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)* project that the government is using as the benchmark for psychotherapy success. Of clients who completed treatment:

- 61% showed reliable improvement in anxiety and depression (vs. 64% IAPT year one)
- 42% showed reliable recovery from anxiety and depression (vs. 43% IAPT year one)

"The Demonstration Project shows the value of our agencies' clinical therapists," said Family Service Ontario board chair Alan McQuarrie. "That Family Service agency psychotherapy can decrease client anxiety and depression from moderate to mild severity in fewer sessions than recommended in the UK's *Improving Access to Psychological Therapies* project demonstrates the highly qualified, organized, and outcome-oriented workforce ready to roll-out the Ontario government's psychotherapy stepped care initiatives."

Over 18 months (September 2018-March 2020), 28 participating Family Service Ontario members collaborated to create a framework and data set to demonstrate client outcomes. Using the Ontario government's preferred Greenspace platform for measurement, agencies tracked psychotherapy progress and outcomes for adults seeking help for anxiety and depression. The project focused on "therapy as usual" where Family Service Ontario agency clinicians treated clients with multi-modal, evidence-based interventions including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Michelle Bergin, Family Service Ontario board member and Demonstration Project spokesperson, added, "Family Service Ontario agency clinicians are registered social workers and/or registered to practice psychotherapy in Ontario, and 200 of these professionals participated in the Demonstration Project. Clinicians attend regular monthly clinical supervision and can provide multi-language services based on the needs of local communities."

Family Service Ontario agencies have been providing evidence-based psychotherapy as a core competency for over 50 years. This report confirms that early-intervention psychotherapy from Family Service agencies helps avoid mental health crises and improves client flow by diverting Ontarians toward cost-effective, community-based treatment and away from expensive hospital and primary care services.

Agencies operate in more than 125 communities across the province and have no waitlists to provide services. There are no OHIP or physician-referral requirements to make an appointment with a Family Service Ontario agency. Agencies offer sliding-scale fees and never turn anyone away due to an inability to pay for treatment to ensure mental health interventions are accessible to everyone.

To read the full ***Family Service Ontario Demonstration Project*** report, visit the Family Service Ontario [website](#).

Family Service Ontario is the association representing 44 community-based Family Service agencies. Agencies provide counselling, psychotherapy, and psychoeducation services to over 250,000 individuals, couples, and families every year. The association regularly consults with MPPs, bureaucrats, and Ontario Health Teams in the development of programs and policies that strengthen and positively affect the lives of Ontarians. Family Service Ontario and its member agencies are experts on mental health, domestic violence and abuse (VAW), sexual assault, anger management, couples counselling, and men's services.

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Background

Family Service Ontario is the association representing 44 community-based Family Service agencies that provide counselling, psychotherapy, and psychoeducation services across the lifespan in more than 125 communities in Ontario. It was incorporated as the Ontario Association of Family Service Agencies (OAFSA) in 1974 before changing its name in 1991.

Agencies employ registered social workers and/or clinicians registered to practice psychotherapy in Ontario. Therapists deal with a multitude of high-risk situations related to mental health to help clients through crises. Clinicians come from a variety of backgrounds to ensure cultural sensitivity and are able to provide services in over 20 languages.

By conducting local outreach programs, our agencies connect with underserved and/or marginalized communities. Helping to create communities where all people have access to services and no one is left behind, agencies offer sliding-scale payment or free services when necessary and never require OHIP or a physician referral.

Our agencies are community-based, integrated service and referral hubs that fill significant gaps in service delivery. Agencies coordinate services with family physicians, mental health clinics in local hospitals, emergency departments, workplaces, schools, police, and Children's Aid Societies. Other community partners, such as the Canadian Mental Health Association, typically refer clients to Family Service agencies.

As well, Family Service Ontario agency services offer a powerful relief to Ontario's health care system by re-directing Ontarians away from hospitals and primary care and into cost-effective community-based treatment.

Family Service Ontario agencies have been providing evidence-based psychotherapy as a core competency for over 50 years – and we know how to deliver services effectively and cost efficiently to over 250,000 individuals, couples, and families each year.

For more information, visit the website at www.FamilyServiceOntario.org.