



NEWS RELEASE

Walk-In Counselling Clinic offers practical, professional service when people need it

Creative Service Clears Counselling Backlog and Strengthens Community

“On our drive home, my daughter said that, for the first time in weeks, she felt hope.”

For Susan and her daughter, Melissa, (not their real names) one visit to K-W Counselling Services' innovative Walk-In Counselling Clinic was enough to restore confidence that some difficult issues facing the teenager could be resolved.

Melissa, a vivacious, outgoing 14-year-old, had become enmeshed in an abusive relationship. When it fell apart, she withdrew, grew depressed and acted out her confusion by shoplifting. The crime, which was totally out of character, made Melissa question everything about herself, and that's when her mother, Susan, knew it was time for professional help.

“I certainly didn't expect we'd be able to see a counsellor the same day,” says the mother, “but one counselling session allowed us to specifically state the problem and the kind of help we felt was needed. The counsellor we saw was able to ask some tough questions and get to the heart of the matter in that one session. What I had expected would take weeks of appointments the counsellor was able to deal with that same day.”

“We walked away with a concise report of what had been discussed and a plan with steps my daughter could take to manage the situation,” Susan adds. “Today, she's lighter and much happier. I'm extremely impressed with the service the Walk-In Counselling Clinic provides.”

Fast, effective and affordable, the service is offered every Thursday from 12pm. to 6 p.m. at K-W Counselling Services, 480 Charles Street East, between Stirling and Ottawa. It's not necessary to call ahead or make an appointment. Unlike most clinics, the average wait for service is less than 30 minutes. If it's going to be longer, clients are told so they can decide whether to wait or come back at an agreed-upon time. In most cases, clients who must leave receive next-day appointments.

“Our goal is to offer practical, professional service, right when people need it,” says Leslie Josling, the agency's Executive Director. “By the time most people contact us, they're anxious to start seeing changes in their lives and relationships. We want to help them begin immediately.”

One of only seven such clinics in Ontario, Waterloo Region's was proposed by Josling soon after she arrived at the agency 18 months ago. “I wanted to do something creative and unconventional because the need for counselling was so great. Besides, people rightfully expect us to deliver quick and fully accessible service.”

“When I pitched the concept to the staff, they just latched on and ran with it,” she says. “There was no stopping them.”

When the Walk-In Counselling Clinic opened quietly in August 2007 to gauge public reaction, 900 people were on a waiting list for counselling. That backlog is now gone. Each Thursday, between 35 and 65 people use the service—which has attracted clients from a wide range of cultures—and demand for counselling is expected to rise dramatically with the region's population projected to grow by 50 per cent over the next 20 years. The Walk-In Counselling Clinic is proactive and progressive.



Residents of Waterloo Region may come to the clinic on their own or with a partner, their family, a community support person or an interpreter. Counsellors provide support for a variety of issues such as family crisis; parenting issues; abuse; communication; separation and divorce; grief and loss; anger; sadness and worry.

Upon arrival, an intake worker meets with clients to ensure the counselling service is a good fit for their needs. Referrals and suggestions for other services are also provided.

The service is geared to income. A number of funding arrangements ensure that all people can be seen. Those who meet with a counsellor have a session lasting an hour to 90 minutes. Clients leave with a clear, common-sense plan to address their concerns and are encouraged to work with that plan. Those who feel they'd benefit from more sessions can return to the Walk-In Counselling Clinic any Thursday or call the agency to ask for ongoing counselling.

Last year, more than 17,300 people were helped by K-W Counselling Services. Its annual budget of \$2.8 million comes from the province, the Region of Waterloo, the United Way and local fundraising. With the addition of this exciting new initiative, the agency is once again demonstrating its vision and vitality, changing the way people experience counselling services — and changing lives like Melissa's, one visit at a time.

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Media inquiries will be dealt with immediately. Every effort will be made to ensure you have access to the information, people and photo opportunities that will help you tell this important story in the most effective and compelling way possible.

Those of us involved with the Walk-In Counselling Clinic believe passionately in its ability to enhance the well-being of individuals and families across the region.

Thanks for helping us get out the word!