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Family Transition Place offers education and works towards prevention

Education is one of the most powerful tools we have to prevent gender-based violence ? and at FTP, it's a commitment that runs deep. From elementary classrooms to high school gymnasiums, from parent workshops to sports fields, FTP's education programs meet young people where they are, building the knowledge, skills, and self-awareness needed to foster healthy, respectful relationships.

Underpinning all of it is collaboration ? with schools, school boards, coaches, mentors, and community partners ? because lasting culture change doesn't happen in a single conversation or a single organization. It happens when an entire community commits to the work together.

Youth education

Youth education continues to be an important part of gender-based violence prevention at FTP. Running for more than 20 years, the program consists of three parts: an eight-week course for students in grades 5 to 8, one-off presentations in high schools, and evening workshops for parents. These programs have reached an estimated 50,000 students across Dufferin and Caledon, all delivered by two full-time staff educators. Combined, they provide interactive, age-specific programming designed to build the foundation for healthy, respectful relationships.

Each year of the grades 5 through 8 program builds on the last, guiding students through understanding stereotypes and empathy, communication and emotional regulation, and personal resilience and decision-making. These elements help students learn to identify the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships, create positive social connections, and improve self-esteem and empathy. High school presentations cover domestic violence, sexual assault, flirting, consent, and harassment in a focused, 90-minute session while parent workshops explore topics such as bullying, social media, and children's mental health and wellness.

The strength of this program is driven as much by its relationships as its content. Schools in Dufferin and Caledon book up to a year or more in advance, with an ongoing waitlist throughout the year. The program has also been adopted by other communities, who are now incorporating it into education programs. As it's reached more than two decades in our schools, some former students are now teachers, and still carrying their youth program keepsake cards into classrooms of their own.

While statistics tell the story of a positive, lasting impact from participation in programs like this, it's the participants' responses that bring the data to life. It's students who wouldn't normally get involved in class that are paying attention and joining in, students who share how the program helped grow their self-esteem, the stories of students who recognize unhealthy behaviours with their peers or families and begin to make changes in their own lives. Perhaps most tellingly, the families who call FTP's crisis intake after a child brought their learning home and asked whether what was happening in their house was healthy.

The program is funded almost entirely through FTP's general community fundraising, with a modest cost-recovery contribution from participating schools. The program's reach continues to grow due to collaboration with the local schools and school boards?that reach is only limited by funding and resources.

FTP's youth educators describe the program as a living, breathing organism, reviewed and refreshed each summer to reflect new trends and emerging challenges our students face in their lives. Topics like cyberbullying and human trafficking, for example, have been added over the years as the community's needs have evolved.

Anti-human sex trafficking training in schools

The Anti-Human Sex Trafficking Training program is dedicated to challenging one of the most pervasive misconceptions surrounding human trafficking: the belief that it only happens somewhere else, to someone else. The reality is that trafficking can occur in any community, affecting young people who may be vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation.

Launched in 2023, the program brings critical education and awareness to students in Grades 7 and 10, age groups identified as being particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Since its inception, the program has reached more than 5,000 students throughout Dufferin County, empowering young people with the knowledge and tools to recognize risks and protect themselves.

Through engaging one-off presentations, students learn how traffickers identify and exploit unmet needs, build trust, and manipulate vulnerabilities. By fostering awareness, critical thinking, and open dialogue, the program equips youth to recognize warning signs, seek support, and help prevent exploitation before it occurs. In doing so, it helps create safer communities and ensures young people understand that human trafficking is not a distant issue; it is one that requires awareness, prevention, and action close to home.

The curriculum is delivered by one educator, funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, who is accompanied by a mobile crisis counsellor to support students who may be triggered by the content. The discussions are impactful and meaningful, and in some cases, students have recognized they may be in a situation where trafficking could be occurring or recognize warning signs in their own relationships.

Teaching in a single-presentation format can be challenging, especially with heavy topics like human trafficking, because it does not offer the same level of relationship-building as longer programs. The 2025/2026 school year brought meaningful validation to the program, as students who were in the first cohort of grade 7s attending the sessions were now in grade 10, attending again. Notably, these students have demonstrated an understanding of the issues, confirming that a single, intensive session can create real, lasting retention, opening the door for more in-depth conversations and questions.

Coaching Leadership Equality and Respect (CLEAR)

Shifting the behaviours and beliefs that lead to gender-based violence begins with prevention education?and that's exactly what CLEAR provides. Grant funding was made available to Interval House of Hamilton through the National Action Plan, and programming was delivered to selected organizations like FTP. The 12-week, evidence-based program trains coaches, teachers, and mentors to lead weekly conversations on respect, consent, bystander intervention, peer leadership, and more.

FTP became a certified delivery agency for the program approximately two years ago and has since been working to bring CLEAR to local school boards and sports organizations. Commitments have been established with the Shelburne Vets Lacrosse Association and the Hill Academy, with delivery planned for the future.

The goal of CLEAR is not a single conversation, but a sustained culture shift. Coaches, mentors, and teachers are uniquely positioned to make a lasting impact?they already hold the trust and attention of the young people they work with.

To learn more, including how you can support these vital programs, please contact Brennan Solecky at brennan@familytransitionplace.ca or at 519-942-4122 ext. 240.