

Monthly Message: FTP separates myths from facts on accessing services

At Family Transition Place (FTP), we offer a warm and welcoming environment of support to anyone who needs it. Whether it's the support of a caring and compassionate counsellor to help guide them on their healing journey, or a comfortable place to stay, thousands of individuals in our community rely on us for safety, support and hope annually.

While the services FTP offers are vast, we often find that there are misconceptions about our work, both about the violence against women sector and the unique services that FTP offers. To dispel and educate, we'd like to share a collection of myths, alongside the truths, to help support the community's understanding of our work.

1. Myth: FTP only offers support for women with children. Fact: FTP supports female-identifying individuals with or without children who are experiencing or have experienced abuse or homelessness as well as men and children through a variety of programs. While only female-identifying individuals (16+) are welcomed to stay in shelter (with or without their children), children are supported through our child witness program and men are supported through our community homeless outreach, mobile crisis services, sexual violence counselling and transitional support services programs. FTP, in partnership with Dufferin Child & Family Services, also co-facilitates the Caring Dads Program, which is a program designed for fathers who have used violence in the home and are looking to improve relationships with their children and their children's mothers. FTP also provides Youth Education programming in many local schools (grades 5-8).

2. Myth: I must leave my partner if I want support from FTP. Fact: You choose what you want to focus on when accessing counselling at FTP, whether it is recovering from an abusive relationship, working on being safe in your relationship (emotionally and physically), or working on leaving your relationship. Counselling is client-centred, which means our staff will meet you where you are, and help you create and work towards clear goals that you set. You will never be required to leave your partner to access support for any of our services.

3. Myth: If I access shelter, I will be sharing a bedroom with other families. Fact: All our emergency shelter units are self-contained and not shared between families. Each unit has a bathroom, living space with a TV, kitchenette and bedroom. We have shared on-site laundry, dining facilities and outdoor spaces.

4. Myth: FTP only supports victims of domestic violence. Fact: FTP supports anyone who has experienced or is experiencing unhealthy relationships or abuse. Additionally, we support anyone (male or female) who has experienced or is experiencing sexual violence, homelessness, is unhoused, or in an unsafe living environment.

5. Myth: My pets can't come with me if I'm accessing shelter. Fact: Recent modifications to our shelter spaces ensure personal and private accommodations for families staying with us. We can welcome most companion pets into the shelter and continue to have long-standing partnerships with local veterinary services, kennels and foster families and the OSPCA through the SafePet Ontario program that can assist in keeping your pets safe.

6. Myth: FTP is a fully funded government agency. Fact: FTP's services and programs are supported by more than 10 different funding sources, including, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the County of Dufferin, the Department of Women and Gender Equality, Ontario Health, Region of Peel and Service Canada. Even with these various generous funders, we rely on private donor and corporate support as well as grant opportunities to make up the shortfalls in our operational budgets and to allow us to facilitate our Youth Education Program and Caring Dads Program both delivered almost exclusively thanks to donor support. Annually, we raise over \$500,000 to support our critical programs and services.

7. Myth: I need to be referred to FTP and pay for services. Fact: Because of our various funders, our services will always be offered at no cost to our community. If you or anyone you know is interested in accessing our services, they simply call our 24-hour Support Line to be connected to a counsellor or program. There are no referrals required.

8. Myth: FTP only offers in-person services. Fact: Our services are client-centred and therefore designed to be as accessible as possible for anyone. We offer in-person services at our Orangeville office (20 Bredin Parkway), Shelburne office (Mel Lloyd Centre ? 167 Centre Street) and our Bolton office (Royal Courtyards ? 18 King St. E.). Additionally, we offer virtual and phone appointments. In some programs, we offer mobile and rural outreach where we can meet clients at an alternate location, including their home. If transportation is a barrier to accessing shelter or services, we can also provide emergency transportation.

It is our sincere hope, with this collection of facts and helpful information, that individuals in our community are informed and empowered to reach out or refer anyone who may need our support to FTP.

Do you have additional questions? Are you interested in supporting families in our community? Please contact Brennan Solecky at brennan@familytransitionplace.ca, or at 519-942-4122 ext. 240.

If you or someone you know needs support, compassionate staff are available to help 24/7.

Call 1-800-265-9178. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.