

The PACE Program – Child Therapy Service

Outline of Service



The PACE Program offers therapy for children aged 3 to 12 who do not attend the PACE Family Program. This service is primarily funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), as a sub-contract with Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV); and by Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS). With parental or guardian consent, the service is provided on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to children living within Vancouver boundaries. The service may include meetings with the family and/or relevant professionals.

Please note that for families connected to:

- A) The Family Preservation & Reunification Programs with Family Services of Greater Vancouver (FSGV)** - Children must have an open Family Services file and referrals must be made to the Referral Centre at (604) 875-6277.
- B) Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS)** - Children must have an open Family Services file. All referrals are made to VACFSS Intake Coordinator at (604) 872-6723 by the child's Social Worker. Family Preservation Workers wanting to refer a child for therapy at PACE are to call the child's Social Worker.

About Child Therapy Service offered through the PACE Program:

Play and the arts in therapy offer children, who have experienced loss and/or trauma, an opportunity to work through, heal and resolve some of their underlying issues in a safe and therapeutic environment. Play, art and other modes of expression, such as movement, drama, music and story telling, can be a natural language for children. They are important outlets for children who are often not able to express themselves verbally with regards to their fears, worries and concerns. Through these modalities, children create a world that they can understand, in which they can practice social skills, overcome frightening or confusing feelings and discover solutions to problems. The imagination offers children a safe means of entering, taking control over and transforming experiences and is a valuable resource for healing and growth.

Through the relationship with the therapist, children's self-esteem is enhanced and they begin to develop inner controls and the ability to make more appropriate decisions. Just as it is helpful for adults to talk to someone about their worries and concerns, it is helpful for children to have an opportunity to play and creatively express accumulated feelings of sadness, worry, frustration, insecurity, aggression, fear and confusion.

By releasing these feelings, children become freer to behave appropriately and the frequency of challenging behaviours is reduced, helping increase their readiness for school, learning and social connections.

A systemic approach is followed at all times. Connection with the birth parents, where appropriate, is part of this service. Where this is not possible, connections are developed with foster parents and/or significant caregivers. Partnerships re developed with other relevant professionals to support the child in his/ her healing process.

Decisions regarding the appropriateness of therapy are made by the referring source and the PACE Intake Team, in consultation with the family, Social Worker, Family Preservation Worker (if different to referring source) and other relevant professionals. Once assessed as appropriate, an initial meeting is held at PACE with the parents (or foster parents / other caregivers), social worker and if appropriate, the Preservation Worker / Family Counsellor, to plan together.

When to refer a child for therapy:

- *If there are clear behavioural signs (e.g. **significant** acting out behaviour, withdrawal) or **significant** behavioural changes (e.g. re: toileting, sleeping, eating).*
- *If there have been traumatic life experiences (e.g. abuse, neglect, witnessing or experiencing violence, broken attachments and abandonment).*
- *If there are to be significant disruptions and a need for support to help child deal with changes.*