



PEACE for Canadian Children and Youth: Training & Mentorship for VAW Shelters/Transition Houses

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1. About the PEACE for Canadian Children and Youth project

The *PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth* project is a three-year project to provide training and mentorship to shelter workers in northern, rural, and remote communities across Canada with the goal of enhancing their capacity to offer specialized supports for children and youth who have experienced and/or witnessed gender-based violence. The project is being carried out by the BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) and Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) and is made possible with funding from Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada.

Over the course of this project, training will be delivered virtually and free of charge to 30 cohorts of shelter workers from across the country. The training consists of 4 interactive online workshops spread over a 4-week period. Each workshop is 3.5 hours in length. Trainings will be scheduled between January and June 2022, with exact dates to be determined with participating shelters. Participants will also have access to several other self-directed online courses created by BCSTH. (see [section 3](#) for more details)

For the training, participants will be grouped into cohorts of up to 15 shelter staff. Each cohort will be connected with an experienced BC PEACE program counsellor who will act as a mentor to the group, providing support and guidance as they integrate the PEACE approach into their work. The mentorship will continue for 18 months after the training is complete. (see [section 4](#) for more details)

At the end of the three-year project, WSC and BCSTH will create a legacy blueprint of promising practices that will be available for widespread use.

2. About the PEACE Approach

The training and mentorship for this project has been adapted from the successful *Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment (PEACE)* program in British Columbia. Originally known as *Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA)*, the program was created by BC transition houses in 1992 to provide dedicated counselling supports to children and youth who have experienced and/or witnessed violence in the home. Today there are 86 PEACE programs and over 150 counsellors in communities across the province.

As part of this project, BCSTH has adapted the PEACE approach, principles, and materials specifically for frontline staff working in VAW shelters/transition houses in rural, northern and remote communities. While the PEACE program in BC was originally structured to work with children after they leave the transition house, its guiding principles and approaches are highly relevant to the work that goes on in shelters and transition houses every day – places where workers constantly respond to the immediate needs of the women, children and youth who are staying there, while at the same time do the important work of acknowledging and bearing witness to their experiences of violence and abuse.

The essence of the PEACE approach is to uphold the dignity of mothers and their children while shining a light on the many resourceful and creative ways that they resist and respond to the violence in their lives. Some of the ways the PEACE approach supports children, youth, and their caregivers include:

- Providing a safe and supportive place
- Providing emotional support
- Acknowledging resistance and resilience
- Teaching skills, such as grounding skills and safety planning
- Sharing family stories
- Listening and witnessing

3. What to expect from the training

Over the course of four interactive online workshops, this training will share the guiding principles and approaches from BC's PEACE program for children and youth who have experienced violence. This is not a sit back and listen-to-an-“expert”- type webinar! This is a cameras-on, highly interactive training where shelter staff are the ‘experts’.

You will be part of a community of no more than 15 participants who share a similar context of working in shelters in remote, rural and northern communities. Participants can expect connection, community and an engaging learning environment. Each cohort will have the opportunity to contribute to the training material by providing specific stories and situations that will be incorporated into small group work. We will explore possible responses to challenges as well as share practices that work in supporting youth, children and their caregivers in shelters.

At the end of the training participants can expect to feel: resourced, encouraged, valued, inspired and more equipped to support young people and their caregivers.

Topics covered will include:

- Welcoming children and youth into shelters
- Upholding dignity as a guiding practice
- Honouring resistance
- Unravelling victim-blaming/mother-blaming
- Understanding ourselves and this work in a colonial context
- Talking about safety and violence with young people – language matters
- The power of witnessing
- Talking to mothers about their kids
- Sharing our best practices for this work
- Working with mothers and children together

4. What to expect from the mentorship

Each training cohort will be connected with a mentor who is an experienced PEACE counsellor. After completing the PEACE training, you will meet with your training cohort and your mentor approximately every 3 months. The mentor will be the point person who helps your group build a community that can provide peer support and learn from each other by sharing knowledge and practices. Together, your group will create a Group Mentorship Plan that clearly identifies steps you want to take to reach specific shared goals for professional development and growth related to supporting young people and families. Over the 18 months, you will work together, with the support of your mentor, towards these goals.

5. Who can apply

This program is open to VAW shelters and transition houses in rural, remote, and/or northern communities outside of BC. This means that you can apply if your shelter is located in a community that is rural OR remote OR northern.

For the purposes of this program, we define these terms as follows:

- Rural: The community where your shelter/transition house is located has a population of less than 30,000. Please note that this is not a hard cut-off. If your community has slightly more than 30,000 people, you can still apply and we will consider your application.
- Remote: The community is located over 350 km from the nearest service centre having year-round road access.
- Northern: Communities in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, or in the [Canada Revenue Agency's "Zone A"](#).

Each shelter can select up to 3 staff members to participate in the training and mentorship. The selected staff can be any frontline worker who interacts regularly with children, youth, and their caregivers in the shelter/transition house setting and who are committed to growing their practice in this area. They do not need to have previous training in working with children and youth, and they do not need to be in dedicated child and youth support roles at the shelter. We strongly encourage you to select at least two staff to participate so that they can support each other in implementing what they learn and so that the knowledge stays with your shelter even in the case of staff turnover.

6. How to apply

To apply, please complete and submit the [online application form](#). You should only submit one application form per shelter, even if multiple staff members will be participating. There is space on the form to list the staff members you have selected to participate.

If you would like to view a copy of the form before completing it, please [click here](#).

If you have any questions about the application process or the program itself, please contact Chandra at csaha@endvaw.ca.