

# CAPC improves the health of vulnerable children and their families, including mental health and chronic disease prevention

## Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)

### CAPC, Toronto, ON

The 200 children each year who come to Breaking the Cycle are all at high risk for the development of mental health problems. The moms who attend the program have many stressors and symptoms in their lives, such as low education, compromised health, depression, eating disorders, domestic violence, and substance misuse.

Recognized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as an exemplary program, Breaking the Cycle focuses on the maternal-child relationships to deliver a range of programs, including street outreach and home visitation. Mothers are involved in the assessment process, and they participate in creating a development plan which incorporates their own observations of their children. A multi-disciplinary team brings expertise in the field of infant mental health.

Additional resources (e.g. speech and language services, occupational therapy, physiotherapy) are made available to the child and family based on assessed developmental needs, and Breaking the Cycle uses several programs that are designed to promote child development and children's mental health.

Positive results of the BTC approach include:

- Enhanced birth and perinatal outcomes for infants of substance involved mothers who are engaged earlier in pregnancy
- Enhance developmental outcomes of children who are involved
- Enhanced parenting confidence and competence
- Enhanced treatment outcomes
- Decreased rates of separation of mothers and children.



Children whose physical, psychological, and emotional needs are unmet are at significant risk for developing a variety of mental health and behavioural problems. If left untreated at their start, conditions like anxiety and depression will persist into adulthood and can become chronic. Besides the toll taken on the individual with lost opportunities for fulfilling work or personal relationships, there are huge social and economic consequences related to the loss of their productivity. It is important that this is addressed because children whose mothers are depressed often develop psychiatric disorders themselves, particularly conduct disorder or depression.

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