



Department of Community Services

Report on Colchester Residential Services Society

Prepared for
The Department of Community Services
Services for Persons with Disabilities

September 2011

Disclaimer

A Review of Colchester Residential Services Society (CRSS) was undertaken by the Department of Community Services (DCS) in November 2010. The activities of the Review Team and the recommendations that were generated over the course of the Review are contained in this Report. The purpose of the Report is to provide guidance to the CRSS Board and DCS regarding opportunities for improvement

This Report will be submitted to and received by the Board in confidence and is expected to be kept in confidence until the Board and DCS have discussed the findings and recommendations.

Disclosure of any or all parts of this document by the Department of Community Services is subject to the provisions of the *Nova Scotia Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Executive Summary

Colchester Residential Services Society (CRSS) is a non-profit publicly-funded organization which was established in 1979. It provides community-based residential services and support to children and adults with intellectual, physical, cognitive and mental health related disabilities in Northern Region. CRSS currently supports forty-five people in a variety of residential settings; a children's residence, a group home, four developmental residences for adults and private homes. CRSS also offers a respite service that may be accessed by interested families in the community. The Review Team visited all CRSS residential sites, including the home for children. Children's homes operate under the Child Welfare division of the Department of Community Services (DCS) and are subject to specific standards and requirements established by DCS for children's residential settings.

CRSS describes the fundamental purpose of the organization, and the core belief that supports organizational operations, in the following statement:

*"People with developmental disabilities have the right to pursue goals related to where and how they live, work, learn and play. C.R.S.S. is committed to assisting the people it supports to pursue their life goals"*¹

Organizational activities are based on a person-centered approach with a particular emphasis on a practice framework that encourages collaborative and respectful relationships, acknowledges diversity and human rights, and recognizes the importance of community inclusiveness and that embraces the concept that one's life is self-defined.² These goals are guided by service principles that acknowledge: the unique nature of each individual, the right of each person to retain and exercise control over decisions that have to do with them, the desire of people to have meaningful and affirming lives, developmental change and growth as a lifelong process, the obligation of the service provider to ensure consistency and coordination of services to the individual and that service delivery systems are ultimately accountable to the person.³

The Minister of Community Services ordered that a Program Review of CRSS be undertaken by the Services for Persons with Disabilities (SPD) Program. CRSS has been the subject of a number of inquiries since the Fall of 2009. These include; multiple allegations of resident to resident abuse reported pursuant to the *Protection of Persons in Care Act* (PPCA) and concerns brought to the attention of the Minister of Community Services by the Nova Scotia Government Employees Union (NSGEU).

On November 29, 2010, a Review Team approved by the Department of Community Services (DCS) commenced a Review of the programs and services, governance and administrative

¹CRSS Mission Statement

²CRSS Statement of Values and Principles

³CRSS Service Principles, August 1995

areas of CRSS operations. The Review Team consisted of Ms. Donna Pettipas, SPD Coordinator of Audits and Ms. Patti MacDonald, SPD Specialist, Northern Region.

This Review broadly examines the CRSS operational landscape, policies, practices and structures that are in place to ensure quality service delivery. The Review does not examine complaints or issues that fall within the purview of the Collective Agreement. The Review does not examine complaints that have been investigated and followed-up with CRSS by other authorities. However, some information related to those investigations will appear in this report.

The Review Team is satisfied that CRSS provides good quality care. CRSS provides service to a number of individuals with very challenging behaviour and acknowledges that the risk of injury is a reality in this work. The organization has developed comprehensive risk management practices that provide a framework for appropriate and timely responses to challenging behaviour. These approaches have been effective in reducing the risk of injury to the person and others and in enhancing the overall development and skills of individual residents.

CRSS front-line staff are educated as Residential Rehabilitation Workers (RRW). The RRW education includes skills related to approaches to challenging behaviour. All RRW staff meet provincial core competency training standards and training is updated regularly. CRSS exceeds the provincial standard for training as they provide ongoing training in Mandt, a recognized and comprehensive behaviour management approach, and in Crisis Intervention for all CRSS staff.

The Review Team established the following objectives, principles scope and methodology:

Objectives

- 1) To conduct an independent and objective Program Review of Colchester Residential Services;
- 2) To provide an assessment of effectiveness, efficiency, safety and continuity of supports of the Colchester Residential Services Society in the areas of governance, administration and leadership;
- 3) To provide the Board of Directors and the Department of Community Services with a summary of observations as well as any recommendations on opportunities for improvement.

Principles

The work of the Review Team was guided by the following principles:

The Team was open and transparent during the Review process;

The Team makes observations and recommendations that can be used to strengthen the organization's performance;

The Team conducted their work with respect and maintained confidentiality in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act and Protection of Privacy Act*, and

The Team members conducted themselves in a manner consistent with the requirements set out by the professional associations that govern their practice.

Scope

The Review Team visited the residential sites operated by CRSS. This did not extend to the Apartment Program which is a program that supports persons with disabilities in their own homes. The Review Team also met with the Board Chair, Executive Director, leadership staff, Support Workers and other individuals to collect information that relates to the effectiveness of the governance, administrative, and operational structures of CRSS.

Methodology

The Team examined a wide range of documentation and spoke to a number of individuals to gather information on the historical and cultural context of the organization and the policies and practices that contribute to the quality of service outcomes for this organization.

The Review Team collected information from the following:

- Meeting with the CRSS Board Chair ;
- Meetings with the Executive Director of CRSS ;
- Focus group with CRSS leadership staff; Supervisors and Program Managers;
- Two large-group meetings with CRSS front-line staff;(low attendance due to short notice and conflict with mandatory training session);
- Small group meetings with CRSS front-line staff;
- Meeting with CRSS Supervisors;
- Meeting with CRSS Program Managers and Human Resource Manager;
- Meeting with SPD Specialist, Northern Region;
- Meeting with SPD Care Coordinator and Supervisor, Northern Region;
- Meeting with SPD Director of Licensing Services and the Manager of Protection for Persons in Care and Licensing;
- Site visits to all CRSS residential locations and discussions regarding the homes with staff and those residents who indicated an interested in talking to the Team.
- Site visit to the newly built CRSS home, which was nearing occupancy at the time of this Review;
- Tour of the day option currently operated by CRSS and discussions with staff and participants about the programs and services offered at this location;
- Conversations by telephone with individuals regarding their concerns about work place safety and incident reporting systems.

The Review Team examined an extensive array of documentation, including but not limited to: Board Charter, Board of Directors Manual, CRSS Bylaws, Statement of Mission, Values and Service Principles, Organizational Chart, CRSS Policy Manual, CRSS Strategic Plan, staff job descriptions; Staff Orientation Handbook, staff training requirements and schedules, names of all full/part-time staff employed by CRSS and the locations they work in; Collective Agreement: CRSS and Nova Scotia General Employees Union (NSGEU); client files, risk management processes and strategies, records and correspondence pertaining to incidents/complaints and activities to remedy, reports and correspondence from Labour and Workforce Development (LWD), documentation of follow-up on recommendations made by LWD, correspondence and documentation relating to concerns received by DCS from NSGEU, and information related to PPC complaints, investigations and outcomes.

The information collected over the course of this Review was categorized and examined under the following subject headings: Governance, Administration and Leadership, and Programs and Services. The key findings and recommendations contained in this report will provide guidance to the CRSS Board and management and the Department of Community Services, Services for Persons with Disabilities Program regarding opportunities for strengthening the existing programs and services, operational performance and policy and administrative functions of the organization.

Key Findings

- Organizational policies and procedures require updating.
- The organization's comprehensive and effective risk management framework may be further strengthened by expanding documentation and staff orientation practices.
- Documentation standards and practices related to placement and wait-list procedures need to be developed by CRSS in collaboration with SPD.
- Northern Region would benefit from the availability of an inter-disciplinary outreach team to provide challenging behavior program expertise and support to individuals and Provider agencies.
- CRSS provides staff training specific to work with persons with complex behavioural support needs in addition to standard core training requirements.
- CRSS requires technological development to support its' work.

Governance

The governance function within individual service provider agencies has the same accountability, albeit at an organizational level, as Government has as its broad responsibility for the entire system. At their respective levels of responsibility both Government and provider agencies are responsible for the "planning, funding, setting of policies and standards, the monitoring of performance . . . prudent use of public monies, the processes used and the achievement of desirable outcomes for the persons served."⁴

⁴ SPD Report of Residential Services. June 2008. pg. 31.

Both government and provider agencies desire a collaborative relationship that reflects respect, honesty and recognition of the interdependence and authority of each party. Boards should be accountable to realize all of the resources of the community and to become stewards of the full range of human and financial resources available. Subsequently, best practice should comprise strengthening voluntary governance systems where local decision-making is vested in a board of competent and committed individuals who know their community and its needs.⁵

The Board of CRSS is comprised of six members and the Executive Director. There was one Board position vacant at the time of this Review. The Board Chair advised that recruitment of Board members has been a challenge. The CRSS Board is representative of a wide variety of experience with members having previous or current backgrounds in education, finance and business. One of the Board members is a chartered accountant and some members also share a familial relationship with individuals served by CRSS. Board members are provided with a formal orientation to their role; an overview of the agency, an introduction to established Board roles, responsibilities and policy and site visits to homes. Board members may serve for an indefinite period.

The roles and responsibilities that pertain to Board functioning feature significantly in the effective operation of an organization. The Board Chair advised that board structure and activities are based on the Carver Model. The model is one that promotes the governing model as an optimal model for non-profit Boards.⁶ The relationship between the Board of CRSS, the Executive Director and the administrative domain is described as effective and respectful of essential boundaries. The distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the Board and those of the Executive Director appear to be quite clear; with the Board dedicating its role to strategic planning, leadership, policy development and the long-term vision for CRSS and the Executive Director overseeing the day-to-day operation of the organization in a manner consistent with the organizations aims and values. CRSS has an established two-year Strategic Plan that clarifies organizational priorities, assets (strengths), challenges and actions towards achieving established priorities. The Strategic Plan was overdue for review by the Board at the commencement of this Review, but was scheduled for review and revision in January 2011.

CRSS has developed a comprehensive Board of Directors Manual that sets out the purpose, authority and responsibilities of the Board in leading the organization toward achieving its' mission and vision. The manual contains copies of the application form that must be submitted by persons considering a Board role and a Declaration of Confidentiality that members are required to sign. The manual also contains the following information related to Board function; code of conduct, terms of reference (general, legal, fiscal and statutory, officer responsibilities, qualifications, authority, accountability etc.), definitions of sector services and terminology, organizational service principles/mission/goals, overview of the history of the organization and the services provided, reference material related to personnel policies, memorandum of understanding, and established Board policies, and Bylaws.

⁵ Report of Residential Services. Community Services: Services for Persons with Disabilities.2008 pg. 32

⁶ Wilson, Bruce. In "Before You Say Yes: A Guide to the Pleasures and Pitfalls of Volunteer Boards". Doreen Pendgracs. Dundurn Press. Toronto. 2010. pg. 43-44

The Board Chair advised that meetings are held on a regular basis, less often in the summer months, but averaging ten scheduled meetings per year. The Board can otherwise be convened as need arises. Board policy also allows for emergency decision making, “In cases of extreme necessity when there is no capacity for the Board to convene to respond to the matter, the Board Chair and/or Vice Chair is empowered by the Board to make decisions on its behalf”⁷ The Executive Director advised that she communicates with immediacy to the Board regarding any adverse matters or other such matters as the Executive Director deems appropriate. The function of the Board committee structure is a “pre board task” which may gather information and investigate policy options for use in Board discussions and decisions. There are two standing committees of the Board: the Personnel Committee (Executive officers will assist the Executive Director with internal issues, problems or deliberations) and the House Committee (to study issues related to housing as required.)⁸

The Executive Director ensures that Board members receive necessary information and documentation prior to each Board meeting. The Board meetings have an established agenda, minutes of the previous meeting are reviewed, any business arising is discussed, additions may be made to the agenda, a financial report and update are presented and the Executive Director delivers her report. Financial updates are provided to the Board by the Treasurer at each Board meeting. The Executive Director may also provide the Board with information to augment the report of the Treasurer. An audited financial statement is completed for presentation to the Board on an annual basis.

The Board of Directors Manual makes explicit the purpose and activities of the Board toward the effective governance of the organization “... vigorous pursuit of its’ mission and objectives, adherence to its’ core values... accountability for the organizations’ performance... for the stewardship of financial resources... (and to) govern with one voice”.⁹ The comprehensive nature of the information contained in the Manual serves to ensure continuity of the effective functioning of the Board.

The Board is responsible for the selection, development, evaluation and termination of the position of Executive Director. The Executive Director has an established job description that denotes the scope of responsibility, reporting relationship, objectives, specific job duties and qualifications that pertain to the position. The Board of Directors has not completed a performance appraisal of the Executive Director for two years.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Board develop a Strategic Plan that is reflective of current organizational priorities, assets, challenges and actions towards achieving established priorities for the term of the plan.**
- 2. That performance reviews of the Executive Director be completed by the Board on an annual basis.**

⁷ CRSS Board Governance, Policy 2.04. Decision Making

⁸ Board of Directors Manual: Terms of Reference. Tab “G”. Board Committees.

⁹ Board of Directors Manual: Terms of Reference -Tab “G”

Administration and Leadership

The leadership team of CRSS is comprised of the Executive Director, two Program Managers, a Human Resource/Workplace Health and Safety Manager and seven Supervisors. There are five Supervisors of residences for adults, one Supervisor of a residence for children and one Supervisor of the Resource Center who oversees the support services for persons living in their own homes.

Executive Director

The Executive Director acts with the authority delegated by the Board and is accountable to the Board for the day-to-day operation of CRSS. The Executive Director

“... is responsible for the overall administration of the agency in accordance with its philosophies, policies and procedures. The Executive Director provides leadership and direction in ensuring the provision of high quality services and is the liaison between the staff and the Board of Directors.”¹⁰

The Executive Director has the authority to make decisions that promote and ensure the effective development of the organization and the services that are provided to residents, consistent with the goals and philosophy of CRSS. The Executive Director meets formally with leadership staff (Program Managers, Supervisors and HR Manager) and Support Workers on a regular basis and is available to them as need arises. The Executive Director also maintains on-going contact with residents and families.

The Executive Director's responsibilities are detailed in a comprehensive job description. The responsibilities assigned the Executive Director include, but are not limited to, preparation of material for the Board's deliberations on future initiatives and direction, ensuring that capable individuals are in place to meet the goals of the organization and that they have opportunities to develop to their fullest potential so that they may contribute to the objectives of the organization, ensuring that clearly communicated policies are in place and that CRSS acts in accordance with its obligations and with relevant provincial legislation, ethical conduct in organizational affairs, ensuring an environment and system of communication is in place that keeps people well informed, keeping the Board informed of organizational activities, maintaining contact with residents, oversight of resident admissions and service planning, accountability for hiring, orientation, training and performance management of staff, oversight of financial operations and all matters that relate to the effective operation of the organization and the overall quality of the services provided by CRSS.¹¹

The Executive Director collaborates with a wide network of local community and province-wide contacts on matters pertaining to service provision, organizational activities and structures, best practice approaches and fundamental sector competencies. The Executive Director represents the organization on the Nova Scotia Residential Agencies Association (NSRAA), Special Care

¹⁰ CRSS. Job Description: Executive Director

¹¹ CRSS. Job Description: Executive Director

and Emergency Preparedness Association, Human Resource Sector Council, Transition Planning Committee (School Board) and the Chamber of Commerce.

CRSS has worked very hard over the last two years, in partnership with DCS, to purchase two new/replacement homes and to oversee the building of a third replacement home. The two purchased homes were in full operation during the period of this Review and the third home was approaching occupancy. The long term plan is to replace the remaining three homes with purchased or new-build homes.

CRSS has a comprehensive policy manual that includes policies and related procedures for Personnel and Program (services) areas of operation. The Personnel section includes policies on hiring, staff development, health and safety, hours of work, compensation, performance and termination. The Program section includes policies on admissions, resident welfare, incident reporting, medication, individual program planning, formal programming, behaviour supports, sexuality, client transfer and discharge. The Executive Director advised the Team that CRSS has identified the need to review and update a number of the existing policy and procedural statements. The tentative plan is to update CRSS policies and procedures in collaboration with other provider agencies that comprise the membership of the Nova Scotia Residential Agencies Association (NSRAA). NSRAA is a coalition of non-profit residential agencies that provide service to persons with disabilities. The Association holds as their Mission the benefit of the collective towards strengthening the ability of member agencies to pursue excellence in community based service.¹²

The Executive Director stated that CRSS has experienced financial pressures over the last year subsequent to bed vacancies and the resulting loss of revenue. The Executive Director advised that the SPD Support Assessment Tool (SAT) provided to CRSS by SPD does not always contain enough detail which requires that CRSS conduct their own comprehensive assessment. These additional assessment activities lengthen the time it takes to fill bed vacancies.

The Executive Director advised the Team that the SPD wait-list referral process is also a factor in managing bed vacancies. Currently SPD forwards documentation relating only to the next person on the wait-list for the level of support that is vacant. CRSS completes their own assessment activities to determine whether the organization has the capacity to adequately provide the support the individual requires or not. If CRSS determine they are unable to support the person, SPD will send documentation on the next person on the wait-list and the process is repeated. The Executive Director suggested that if SPD submitted several referrals to CRSS for review, assessment activities could occur concurrently on multiple referrals and increase the likelihood of placement in a shorter time-frame.

The Executive Director advised that it would be helpful to collaborate with SPD on establishing documentation requirements for the admission of persons requiring an urgent/immediate placement. This information is required to ensure that an individualized plan of support (interim/long term) is developed by CRSS on the basis of the information made available to them and to better ensure the effective mitigation of risk.

¹² www.nsraa.ca

Recommendations

- 3. That the CRSS policy and procedural manual be updated to reflect current organizational expectations and practice.**
- 4. That SPD and CRSS identify opportunities to increase the utility of the Support Assessment Tool.**
- 5. That SPD seek input on the wait-list referral process and practices with a view to developing efficiencies.**
- 6. That SPD seek input on documentation requirements for urgent/emergency placements.**

Human Resource and Program Managers

The Human Resource Manager is a newly created position at CRSS. The Human Resource Manager maintains supervisory responsibilities for one home and has assumed responsibility for; staff interviews, contracts, orientation and training; Joint OH & Safety Committee meetings and activities; Fire and Life Safety plans and monthly inspections of residential sites; review and revisions of the Emergency Measures Plan (EMO); on-call duties etc. A formal job description for the position of Human Resource Manager was under development at the time of this Review.

CRSS has two Program Managers who report directly to the Executive Director. The responsibilities accorded these positions are detailed in a formal job description and include: supporting the Executive Director in the management of administrative operations including labour negotiations; liaison with community groups, peer organizations, agencies and funders; oversight of organizational compliance with relevant regulatory requirements; participation in budget development and management; coordination of client intakes, referrals and assessments; act as a resource to residents and staff in assigned sites; attending site staff meetings; development of framework for policy and practice related to Labour and Workforce Development (LWD) requirements; development of proposals specific to organizational development; participate in rotation for 24/7 on-call duties etc.¹³ The Program Managers advised that the migration of a number of their responsibilities to the Human Resource Manager will allow them to focus on an expanded role for supporting Supervisors and staff, facilitating training, working with staff on individualized program plans and reporting requirements, the development of quality assurance mechanisms, reviewing and revising CRSS forms, documentation templates and requirements and filing systems.

The Program Managers advised that the most challenging component of their job is to locate appropriate and timely external sources of support to manage and respond to challenging behaviour of clients. The Team was advised that CRSS has been utilizing private psychological services for individual residents.

¹³ CRSS Job Description: Program Manager

CRSS has also been able to access the services of the Coast Team, which operates out of the Nova Scotia Hospital, services offered by the IWK and a number of other private clinicians who are able to provide assessment, assist in framing intervention strategies, support and education for staff and a period of follow-up. A number of CRSS residents have previously or are currently receiving services that relate to oversight of challenging behaviour that require them to travel to Halifax on a regular basis, accompanied by one or two staff.

The Team was informed that there is as much as a one-year wait to access mental health services provided by the local District Health Authority (DHA) and a five month wait for crisis support services. CRSS has also experienced ongoing difficulties when seeking a rapid mental health assessment in the emergency department of the local hospital for a resident in crisis. The assessment service responds to persons with mental illness who are presenting with acute mental health crisis, whereas the CRSS resident may be experiencing escalating chronic behavioural issues that may be better managed through comprehensive, long-term behavioural approaches, that would include crisis support strategies.

The Review Team considers that many expenses currently incurred toward the provision of behavioural support services are substantial and believe that these resources may be better utilized if re-allocated to developing a regional model of adjunct behavioral support services. The Regional model would ideally be an inter-disciplinary team that would offer expertise related to responding to challenging behaviour specific to persons with intellectual disability. This is consistent with a recommendation made in the Report of Residential Services (June 2008) that, "An inter-disciplinary outreach service (be) developed in each of the four regions to provide advice and programming supports ..."¹⁴

Recommendations

7. That SPD develop a framework for the development of an inter-disciplinary team in Northern Region to provide advice and programming support to individuals and service providers.

Supervisors

Supervisors report directly to the Executive Director and have a comprehensive job description that details their primary roles and responsibilities. The job description includes the following responsibilities: the efficient operation of assigned residence(s) in accordance with CRSS's philosophy, policies and procedures; provision of leadership, direction and discipline to ensure effective staff team function and the provision of optimal service delivery; ensuring that residents are supported with respect and sensitivity; financial management; management pertaining to the daily operation of the home and staff; safety and maintenances; public relations and education that enhances the agency's standing as a community member and a service provider and proactive participation in the ongoing development of services for persons with disabilities. The job description also details hiring criteria and professional competencies for Supervisors that

¹⁴ Report of Residential Services. Community Services: Services for Persons with Disabilities. pg. 37

require candidates to have an undergraduate degree in social work, sociology, psychology, special education or other area of human service study and two years experience in working in the field of developmental disabilities; or an equivalent combination of education, training and work related experience.

Supervisors expressed that they are “very busy” in their roles and stated a high level of satisfaction with their work in general. Supervisors are responsible for staff scheduling, submission of time sheets, preparation of information related to shift premiums, staff scheduling, management/team meetings, staff interviews/orientation, scheduling training, after-hours on-call requirements, oversight of property maintenance and Fire/Life Safety requirements, liaison with families, SPD Care Coordinators and day and school programs, submission and tracking of requests for special need approvals, back-up supervision for other CRSS homes etc. The Supervisors stated that they work hard at remaining current with respect to issues and events across the agency that they may be called upon to respond to.

The Supervisors spoke at length to the Review Team about the inefficiencies that occur due to a lack of technological supports. CRSS has limited e-mail and internet services available for Supervisors and staff use as the homes do not have computers. Access to computer software that allows staff to access agency templates and resource materials for report writing would most likely increase the quality of first draft reports, allow for an electronic filing system for their ready reference and expedite the process of review and submission that Supervisors complete. Privacy and confidentiality issues feature prominently with respect to the use of any of these technologies and must be a consideration, both from the perspective of protecting privacy and related to cost, in any technology development plan. Supervisors have suggested that two more FAX machines and photocopiers at other CRSS locations would be helpful and to have one at each location would be ideal.

Recommendations

8. CRSS is encouraged to develop a three to five year Information Technology (IT) Plan that will identify the organization’s information technology needs and provide direction for the allocation of IT.

Support Staff

CRSS front-line staff are referred to as Support Workers and meet the DCS core competency requirements designated for Residential Rehabilitation Workers (RRW). CRSS Support Workers have a comprehensive job description that conveys the following scope accorded these positions:

“The Support Worker will carry out all work-related activities in a manner that is consistent with the Philosophies, Service Principles and Policies and Procedures of C.R.S.S. in accordance with the Collective Agreement between Colchester Residential Services Society and Nova Scotia Government and General Employees

Union to provide all aspects of community support to people with developmental disabilities”¹⁵

The job description further details the Support Worker's reporting relationship and primary responsibilities which include: working as part of an interdisciplinary team; attending staff meetings; implementation of individual programs and protocols; medication management; completion of all required documentation and records; individualized program planning and development from a broad/holistic approach; assisting with/completing resident personal care, feeding, mobility etc; attending core and specialized training, household safety and maintenance; assisting residents with budgeting, purchases, financial records; supporting residents to attend medical/health related appointments; contact with families; knowledge of and ability to implement the site EMO plan etc.

The Review Team met with a number of staff. Attendance at one of the group sessions was low as it conflicted with mandatory training dates. However, the second group session was well attended and representative of staff from all the residential sites and the Resource Center. The Review Team held meetings with individual Support Worker teams from specific residential sites as well. Staff were articulate and thoughtful in their discussion and responses to the Review Team. They provided their views and thoughts on concerns and issues that were recently brought forward. Many staff stated that each CRSS residential site is unique and that not every home is a good fit for every staff.

The Review team heard from some staff about the effects they have experienced after responding to incidents of aggressive behaviour. The staff were aware of the availability and general purpose of the CRSS Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM). Based on feedback from staff the Review Team considers that some staff may not be fully aware of the well-documented role, function and benefits of critical incident stress management as a necessary component of personal/professional support to persons working in challenging circumstances.

The Review Team would encourage staff to consistently utilize the available CISM support, not only in the period immediately following specific incidents, but at any time that staff begin to identify a sense of distress connected to working in challenging circumstances. Each person's response to crisis will differ. The more one becomes self-aware of feelings of distress or dysfunction the sooner specific support, such as CISM intervention, can be accessed to mitigate the effects of the distress and assist the person in maintaining optimum mental health and well-being.

The Review Team met with Support Workers who work specifically with residents who have very challenging behavioural requirements. The staff acknowledged that each staff has their specific strengths and that the role of the staff team is to provide peer support and to utilize the various strengths of team members to ensure the best possible outcomes. The staff emphasized that they employ a holistic approach to their work with residents and provided many examples of the progress that residents have made and the potential they see for persons to

¹⁵ CRSS. Job Description: Support Worker (full time/Part time).

enjoy continued growth and development. The staff expressed their continuing commitment to the residents they work with. The staff did not underestimate the challenges that they respond to and the requirement for comprehensive support and response plans to ensure safety for all.

The Review Team heard that urgent/emergency placements are often difficult for staff to respond to. Many of the staff acknowledged that the nature of the placement itself is a source of chaos (person in crisis or coming from a destabilized environment, short notice etc.). However, they suggested that the process could be improved. Staff noted that all available information related to the person's history, medical status, skill level, specific risk issues, behavioural issues and least/most effective interventions, medication and medical/personal contact list should be provided to CRSS; ideally in advance of the placement. Staff also suggested that CRSS seek out interested and trained staff to act as a team that can be convened and oriented to support challenging urgent/emergency placements.

Many of the staff spoke to the Review Team about the CRSS documentation requirements. Staff expressed concern about the number of times that reports they have written are returned to them for revisions by the Program Managers or Supervisor. The issue illustrates the need for staff to receive more training in documentation and report writing. The Review Team would suggest that CRSS review how these matters are managed so that staff may better understand that CRSS approaches these matters from an educational perspective. Training specific to documentation will be helpful in orienting staff to the underlying principles and requirements that relate to record keeping and ensure greater consistency in the quality of documentation across the organization.

CRSS has a comprehensive organizational network to support and respond to residents and Support Staff as they negotiate the management of challenging behaviours. The Executive Director spoke at length about the dedication and commitment of CRSS staff and advised the Team of the value she places on supporting staff to effectively carry out their responsibilities to the residents. This is demonstrated in the efforts of CRSS to ensure that staff have appropriate training, work site specific Risk Awareness and Safety Identification Plans (previously called "Violence in the Workplace Prevention Plans"), 24/7 supervisory and program support, regularly scheduled staff meetings, inclusion in resident program and protocol development and review, 24/7 access to CISM support and debriefing, staff recognition programs, newsletters, and opportunities to contribute to agency practice through informal discussions as well as through more formal mechanisms such as staff meetings, Cluster meetings (homes with similar service mandates meet regularly with the Executive Director), CPI/MANDT training, the Labour Management Committee and Joint Occupational Health and Safety meetings.

CRSS holds staff training as key to successful organizational outcomes. Support Staff are trained in the mandatory core training components required by DCS for Residential Rehabilitation Workers (RRW) (Fire and Life Safety, Medication Awareness, Crisis Prevention/Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (CPI), Standard First Aid and CPR, Health and Personal Care, Individualized Planning and Behavioural Supports). Training for Fire and Life Safety, First Aid and CPR and Medication Awareness all require recertification at regular intervals. The proficiency of staff to produce and maintain well written records has become increasingly important given the multiple functions that documentation serves and the broad

nature of the persons or authorities who may be reviewing CRSS documentation for specific purposes.

CRSS staff are also trained in the Mandt System and CISM. Mandt training is provided by CRSS staff who have been certified, and who must undergo regular re-certification, to train other staff in this particular approach. CISM training does not operate on the same train-the-trainer model and must be provided by an external facilitator. CRSS considers that both Mandt and CISM training are vital components of the organization's efforts to achieve effective outcomes with/for residents and for optimizing the safety and well-being of residents and staff when working with persons with challenging behaviour. Mandt training is not required by the provincial standard for training RRW's and is not approved by DCS for use in children's homes.

Recommendations

9. That CRSS provide staff with documentation training.

10. That CRSS include information regarding the probable and possible risks associated with managing challenging behaviour in the staff Orientation Manual.

11. That staff regularly utilize CISM support, through formal mechanism such as the CISM Team or informally through debriefing with a Supervisor or other trusted colleague, as a necessary component of maintaining personal health and well being and professional competence.

Programs and Services

The Executive Director articulated the mission, purpose and activities of the organization in a manner that demonstrated an informed and current perspective of the changing culture of "care", a commitment to person-centered planning and approaches and effective risk management practices through clear pro-active intervention and prevention plans. The Executive Director has developed and oversees an organizational framework for CRSS that ensures all residents have well developed individualized plans of service tailored to their unique needs.

CRSS places emphasis on services that support the development and well-being of the whole person and the promotion of the person as a contributing member of the community. CRSS strives to provide an environment for residents that is choice rich and that encourages the highest possible level of each person's engagement and empowerment. The Executive Director advised that CRSS has very good relationships with the residents' families who are supportive, involved and active in the life of their family member, the home and the greater organization.

The Executive Director advised that issues that have arisen within the organization largely relate to the provision of support services to persons with challenging behaviours. CRSS supports persons with intellectual, developmental, mental and physical disabilities. Individuals may have a dual diagnosis (i.e.) an intellectual disability and a mental health issue, as well as chronic/acute/episodic physical and mental health related conditions or disease. Persons

served by CRSS are also representative of a broad range of histories, opportunities, abilities, autonomous natures, support networks, interests and goals and subsequently require support services that are based on the context of their unique lives. Individuals may also demonstrate challenging behaviours, such as aggression, that have the potential to cause harm to the person, to others or to property. Presenting behaviours can span a range of frequency, intensity and duration.

CRSS has developed a comprehensive body of documentation and templates for staff education and reference that better ensures consistency of practice across the organization. The documentation includes; specific information and appendices for resident's Personal Profile, a template for completing the Individual Program Plan (IPP) Goal Summary with a standardized key that describes progress on specific goals, "Writing Your Account of the Incident" which provides a detailed description of requirements and expectations related to the preparation of incident reports, a template for quick reference of basic resident information, tracking dates of appointments, a template for the analysis of behaviour, a comprehensive and standard Location House Orientation that requires a staff signature attesting to their having received orientation to the home they are working in and descriptions of the standardized, colour-coded binder information system that appears in all homes.

Multiple authorities have been involved in follow-up regarding complaints and allegations about CRSS. An investigation was conducted by Labour and Workforce Development (LWD), Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Division subsequent to a complaint received March 25, 2010. The outcome of the investigation was issuance of two compliance orders. In 2010 a report was made to the RCMP alleging an assault against staff. After making inquiries at CRSS the file was closed by the RCMP.

Between November 2009 and November 2010 SPD Northern Region received and reviewed complaints that processes were not being followed. SPD made the following recommendations to CRSS:

- Provide all staff with an orientation and overview of the *Protection for Persons in Care Act*.
- Review with all CRSS staff the protocol for staff and/or Supervisors to make referrals to PPC after hours and on weekends.
- Ensure prospective staff are aware of the range of capacities/strengths and challenging behaviours presented by CRSS clients.
- Notification of Incidents to continue being forwarded to each resident's SPD Care Coordinator.
- Continue with the development, enhancements and implementation of resident's individual plans of support, contracts, professional consultations, staff training and regular contact with SPD Care Coordinators.

CRSS followed up on all of the recommendations. SPD Northern Region facilitated four sessions with CRSS staff and two Board Members on PPC legislation.

CRSS was the focus of eleven referrals to PPC since November 2009. Eight were closed at intake. Three were investigated and determined to be unfounded.

The Review Team heard from some individuals who had concerns about workplace safety in relation to working with persons with disabilities who exhibit challenging and aggressive behaviours. The Review Team is aware of the prevailing understanding that aggressive behaviours often occur as a consequence of psychosocial stressors, physical or mental health related issues, skill deficits or an inability to communicate.¹⁶ The Review Team is aware of the World Health Organization's definition of violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation"¹⁷ and the importance of examining the care setting framework and environment in relation to such complaints.

Recommendations

12. That SPD examine its complaints process and consider developing a notification of decisions protocol for service providers in relation to complaints.

13. That CRSS update policies and procedures that relate to incident reporting to include the requirements for reporting pursuant to the *Protection of Persons in Care Act*.

Conclusions

It is the opinion of the Review Team that Colchester Residential Services Society provides service consistent with the organizations stated Mission, Service Goals and Principles to persons with disabilities. CRSS services are rendered at an high standard of quality that is due to the efforts of the organization to ensure that the best interest of the person with disabilities remains central to all activities, that supports are consistent with the goals that individuals choose for themselves, that agency staff are provided with the training necessary to effectively carry out their responsibilities, that organizational expectations are based on best practice evidence and that risk management practices remain an integral component of the organizational framework.

The concerns that prompted this review were in relation to reports of resident to resident and resident to staff aggressive behavioural incidents. The primary focus of this Review was to examine organizational policies and practices and determine the extent to which they met with SPD requirements, pertinent legislative/regulatory frameworks, and current approaches based on best practice initiatives and the organizations over all effectiveness in supporting individuals with challenging behaviour and the staff in direct service delivery.

The Review Team is satisfied that CRSS provides good quality care. CRSS provides service to a number of individuals with very challenging behaviour and acknowledges that the risk of injury is a reality in this work. The organization embraces a solid philosophical foundation regarding the causes of challenging behaviour and employs effective programs aimed at the prevention

¹⁶ Powers, Richard E., Assessment and Management of Aggressive Behaviour for the Person with Intellectual Disability. Bureau of Geriatric Psychiatry. 2005

¹⁷ www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/index.html

and management of behaviour that negatively impacts the quality of the persons' life and that of those around them. The organization has developed comprehensive risk management practices that provide a framework for appropriate and timely responses to challenging behaviour. These approaches have been effective in reducing the risk of injury to the person and others and in enhancing the overall development and skills of individual residents.

The Review Team acknowledges that staff can be subject to physical and psychological stress as they support people who have very challenging behaviour. However, despite these challenges CRSS staff demonstrate a genuine interest and commitment to the residents. It is this commitment that features prominently in the on-going progress and goal attainment that residents currently enjoy and that serves as a point of job satisfaction expressed by many staff.

The Review Team offers the recommendations contained in this Report as opportunities for improvement that are meant to further strengthen the organization in its mission to support individuals with disabilities.

The Review Team wishes to thank the Board, Executive Director, Leadership Staff, Support Workers and residents for their time and the information and insight they provided that served to inform the work of the Review Team.