THE PARENT OUTREACH WORKER PROGRAM
Evaluating a neighbourhood-based strategy to identify, connect and support families

Some families and neighbourhoods experience challenges due to poverty, isolation, and other related issues. The Parent Outreach Worker (POW) program is an early intervention and prevention strategy that reaches out to families in Guelph who may be isolated or struggling. It provides supports that are tailored to the unique needs and strengths of individual families.

In late 2012, Outreach Workers began supporting families in Guelph’s Brant and Two Rivers neighbourhoods. In July 2015, the program expanded to Grange Hill East. In 2016, the POW program was evaluated to assess its impact on families being served.

Between July 2013 and September 2016, Outreach Workers made 5525 contacts in their neighbourhoods. In that time, 276 registered clients and families have received support. Hundreds more have been supported anonymously.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### Accessing Formal Services and Supports

- Families who participated in the POW program reported improved access to formal services and supports.
- Since meeting their Outreach Worker, 92% of survey participants reported accessing services that they would not have used before.

#### Increasing Access to Basic Needs

- Outreach Workers helped clients access food more than 1375 times.
- That’s roughly once every day since the program began.
- 84% of participants said it was easier to get school supplies since they started working with their Outreach Worker.

#### Building Social Support Networks

- Outreach workers have supported 77% of all clients with financial concerns.
- 3 out of 4 participants have met new people in their neighbourhood since working with their Outreach Worker.

“She makes it clear to the members of our neighbourhood and community that we’re not just a job or clients, but that we’re people too. First and foremost, we’re people. And when you live in poverty…being made to feel like you’re not just a job really matters to a person.”

### CONCLUSIONS

There is compelling evidence that the POW program has a positive impact on families and neighbourhoods. Outreach Workers are highly valued parts of their communities and are considered essential resources by clients.

#### Recommendations

- Continue to operate the POW program in Brant, Grange Hill East, and Two Rivers.
- Explore opportunities to expand into additional Guelph neighbourhoods.
- Support Outreach Workers to continue advocacy for and with clients.
- Increase awareness of the program and its successes.
- Document the specific agencies and services to which clients are referred.

### Researchers

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