

**ECLYPSE Youth Resource Centre
Evaluation of Services**

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Prepared by



***Centre for Research
and Education
in Human Services***

73 King Street West, Suite 300
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 1A7
Phone: (519) 741-1318 Fax: (519) 741-8262
E-mail: general@crehs.on.ca
Web page: <http://www.crehs.on.ca>

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- Andrew Taylor & Julie Wise, CREHS Evaluation Team

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Please contact Paul Sherman, Executive Director, 905-455-4100,

psherman@rapportyouth.com

155 Clark Blvd., Unit 11, Brampton, ON, L6T 4G6

www.rapportyouth.com

ECLYPSE Youth Resource Centre Evaluation of Services Final Evaluation Report

Abstract

This report presents the findings of a year-long evaluation of ECLYPSE Youth Resource Centre (**Ex**periential Centre **L**inking Youth to **P**urposeful Self-**E**xpression), a multi-service youth drop-in centre at the Bramalea City Centre in Brampton, Ontario. Information was collected through client tracking forms, feedback surveys for youth and for staff, and a series of qualitative interviews.

Findings suggest that most youth who use ECLYPSE have positive experiences. They described the centre as accessible, welcoming, informal, and non-judgmental. They report a variety of personal benefits, including study skills, job search skills, and increased ability to handle a variety of psychological or social issues. Youth also appreciated the opportunity to learn about and access a variety of complementary services at one location.

The advantages of the ECLYPSE model include more convenient inter-agency referrals and improved access to services. ECLYPSE is clearly making contact with the “high risk” youth it was designed to serve. Furthermore, participating youths appear to be contributing to the centre’s success. The most common means through which youth come to know about ECLYPSE is through informal referrals from their peers. Front-line staff in the various programs housed at ECLYPSE appreciate the opportunity to work together. They communicate regularly about their work, offer one another support, and share what they’ve learned.

Most stakeholders felt that it was front-line staff who engaged most actively in collaboration, and benefited the most from it. It seems clear that a great deal more of this type of collaboration is possible within the ECLYPSE model. Improved orientation for new staff, clearer expectations around inter-agency collaboration, and more formalized referral protocols were among the suggestions offered for improving ECLYPSE. A more active role for front-line staff and youth in management and planning functions was also suggested.

Conclusions

The findings presented here suggest that ECLYPSE is a platform from which several organizations are able to provide a range of services and referrals that youth are attracted to and find helpful. Staff and youth seem to agree that their success lies in the friendly, respectful attitude of staff, the welcoming atmosphere, the convenient mall location, and the concrete skills that youth are able to gain while there. ECLYPSE has helped a diverse range of young people at risk in a very practical way, and they clearly appreciate this help. Since many of the youth surveyed have found it difficult to function within traditional school & social service settings, these results are especially encouraging.

The programs involved in ECLYPSE interact in a variety of beneficial ways. Front-line staff have appreciated the opportunity for informal support and information sharing. This has helped them to understand particular clients better, and also given them new insight into issues facing their youth clients. However, our findings suggest that these benefits have accrued mostly for front-line staff members who have been at ECLYPSE for a year or more. Newer staff members, people who are present less often at the location, and managers supervising ECLYPSE staff members report fewer partnership-related benefits.

It also seems clear that different kinds of partner organizations may need to be accommodated in order for them to benefit fully from the partnership. A layout that allows for more discreet meetings with clients, for example, may be helpful to YSAP. A stronger protocol for internal referrals would be very useful to TELL.

The staff and the organizations involved in ECLYPSE continue to believe in the potential of the model, and would like to find ways to create more intensive and inclusive collaboration among front-line service providers. They would like to include additional services of interest to their clients, and develop more formalized agreements about inter-agency referrals.

Partner organizations were somewhat ambivalent about the degree to which participation in ECLYPSE had led to benefits for them. They felt communication within the partnership had been clear, respectful and inclusive and they were generally pleased with the Centre's success. However, Collaborative Management Team members did not, on average, feel that their participation in ECLYPSE had helped them learn new skills, realize efficiencies or form new partnerships.

Front-line staff, on the other hand, reported that working at ECLYPSE had led to concrete benefits for them. They felt they understood issues better, learned new skills, and formed new partnerships. Their challenge, especially when they were new to ECLYPSE, was in developing an understanding of the overall goals of the Centre and their role within it.

For these reasons, we recommend that ECLYPSE consider strategies to **involve existing partners more fully in the partnership.**

- Efforts to more fully engage new front-line staff members and front-line staffers who are present in the space less frequently should be considered. Strategies may include developing a more detailed written explanation of the ECLYPSE model and philosophy as well as planned opportunities for peer-to-peer support among staff.
- Ongoing discussions on how to make cross-organizational referrals quicker and easier for youth (including changes to layout, and the possibility of “priority access” for ECLYPSE partners) should continue.

ECLYPSE is effective because front line staff from participating organizations do more than simply work out of the same location. They actively collaborate in a variety of ways. Strategies to **reform the governance of the partnership** in ways that maximize this type of collaboration should also be considered.

- Partner organizations should consider formalizing the minimum expectations of organizations that participate at ECLYPSE. In particular, the expectations of front-line staff working at ECLYPSE with respect to their participation in referral, informal communication, and staff-to-staff peer support should be made clear.
- The Collaborative Management Team should consider ways it can act as a forum for dialogue among the individuals most actively involved in ECLYPSE. In particular, it should consider involving front-line staff and participating youth more formally in the planning and management process.
- ECLYPSE should also consider whether there is a more efficient way to keep managers from partner organizations informed and involved. Collaborative Management Team meetings have proven more useful to some managers than others.

Strategies to reform and focus **the outreach efforts of ECLYPSE** should be considered.

- Especially given ECLYPSE’s new location, outreach strategies that encourage and promote youth-to-youth referral should be considered.