



Alpha Court

alphabits newsletter



Community Mental Health & Addiction Services


FALL 2023

Message From the Executive Director



Over the last couple of months, I am sure many of us have been hearing people express their discontent with the arrival of Fall. Usually this is in the context of the winter months that are soon to follow; however, Fall can present an opportunity. This time of year, can provide a chance to emulate what nature is doing around us which is letting go of the old in preparation for the new.

As the trees let their leaves go, we need to let go of some of the issues, situations or feelings we may be carrying around. Not letting go can result in getting stuck or ruminating which can have a negative effect on our mental and physical health. I am sure many of us have experienced and watched others harbour resentments from the past that cannot be undone or changed. Unfortunately, this can exasperate sadness, anxiety, poor relationships and feelings of powerlessness.

Over the next few months, take time to let go of some of the issues, feelings or events from the past that may be weighing you down. When trees let go of their leaves in the Fall, they create a space for new growth in the Spring. Much like the trees, if we can let go, we can create space for something new. - *Nicole Latour* 

*“Autumn is the mellower season, and what we lose
in flowers we more than gain in fruits.”*

- Samuel Butler

Partners in Care

Alpha Court is embarking upon a new initiative to provide support to the people who are actively involved in the life of a person supported by Alpha Court (often referred to as partners in care). These people are not paid formal supports but rather parents, partners, friends, relatives, etc. of people who are facing mental health and/or addiction challenges.

Our vision is to promote an inclusive space with partners in care that invites engagement and provides education on Alpha Court's services, therapeutic approaches and external resources.

It is our hope this initiative enhances client outcomes, empowers partners in care in their role and strengthen the experiences for front-line workers.

We will be starting a series of integrative workshops in the Fall of 2023 that delve into subjects, such as, support vs. taking responsibility, importance of self-care, resiliency, informed choices, consent and recognizing shame and guilt.

We look forward to working with our partners in care in the upcoming month. 💡



Alpha Court Administration Staff

Much like a clock, people usually only see its face but do not see everything that goes on behind the face to make the clock run smoothly. This is similar to the Administration Staff in an Organization. Behind every Organization is an Administration Team that keeps everything going and running smoothly. They may not be the face of the Organization, but they are instrumental in its daily function and they make things happen. Thank you to Katelyn, Margie and Kim for all of your hard work and your support to everyone at Alpha Court. 💡

Program Highlights

Addictions Supportive Housing Program

In recognition of National Addictions Awareness Week (November 19th -25th), we would like to highlight our Addictions Supportive Housing Program (ASH).

This program offers rent supplements and support to people who are facing addiction challenges in the City of Thunder Bay and are homeless or at risk of being homeless. In partnership with Landlords in the private market, we offer affordable housing throughout the city. People can be anywhere in their recovery journey, including active substance use, to qualify for this program. In addition to affordable housing, Alpha Court offers support for people in this program through the provision of case management offered by Paul, Aliyah and Sara. 💡



Your Opinion Matters

Thank you to everyone who completed our 2023 Ontario Perception of Care Survey. Your valuable feedback helps us keep doing what we do well and make improvements in areas where we may not be doing as well.

Highlights from the Ontario Perception of Care Survey (OPOC)

What are we doing well?

- 96% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that their worker believed in the client's ability to change and grow.
- 100% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that their worker understood their needs and were responsive to these needs.
- 96% of respondents indicated that if a friend needed help, they would refer their friend to Alpha Court.
- 97% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that they are treated with dignity and respect by program staff.

Where do we need to improve?

Outcomes indicated that as an Organization, we need to improve our discharge planning process. We appreciate this feedback and through our Quality Improvement Committee, we are working on implementing strategies to improve our discharge planning process. To date, Alpha Court has engaged with an Excellence Through Quality Improvement Project (EQIP). This has been a valuable resource in our pursuit to improve discharge planning with the people we serve. The EQIP team, which includes front-line and managerial staff, have put significant effort into this project. We have started the process of implementing strategies to enhance our discharge planning process and over the next year we will be monitoring the impact of these initiatives. 💡

Thank You

Alpha Court would like to send a huge thank you to two people who have volunteered their time into helping others.

Over the last couple of years, **Robin Cooper** has been putting together bags of items for people who are transitioning from a state of homelessness to being housed. She has provided numerous bags to Alpha Court to provide for people moving into a rent supplement unit. Your time and effort are appreciated by all who your generosity has touched.

For several years **Rajoo** has been offering free income tax clinics to some of our clients. Rajoo states he is “happy to be of service year-round at multiple locations, and show kindness to strangers by helping them access government services. To help them with Navigating the tax system which might seem challenging to some.” 💡



*“It’s not how much we give,
but how much we put into giving”
– Mother Teresa*

International Day for the Elimination/Eradiation of Violence Against Women - November 25th

November 25th is dedicated to the **International Day for the Elimination/Eradiation of Violence Against Women**.

This day is to raise awareness around the world that women are subjected to many forms of violence.

November 25th is also the start of the **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**, an annual international campaign to end violence against women, girls, 2SLGBTQT+ that runs until 10 December which is **Human Rights Day**.

Visit the link to learn more:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women>

As Mental Health Professionals, we see the affects violence has on people which includes: post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and substance abuse.



Forms of violence against women are:

- Domestic abuse
- Rape/sexual violence/harassment
- Stalking/cyber harassment
- Psychological abuse
- Human trafficking
- Genital mutilation
- Murder
- Child marriage



Alpha Court is Here to Help!

If you or someone you know is experiencing violence, Alpha Court is available to assist people to connect with needed resources and support. We have walk-in or call-in services Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons from 1-4 p.m. 💎 – *Written by: Kristine Wilson*

Building a Future Free from Gender Based Violence

White Ribbon is the world's largest movement of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls, promote gender equity, healthy relationships and a new vision of masculinity. <https://www.whiteribbon.ca/>



Erin's Story

Prior to February 2021, Erin found herself in a dark place, trapped in a destructive relationship and contemplating a return to drugs as a means of coping. However, Erin bravely reached out to get support and guidance via Case Management Services.

This decision led her to connect with Alpha Court Mental Health and Addiction Services, through this agency interventions she discovered a comprehensive support system, that provided individual services directed to her unique needs.

Erin states, that the weekly check in's either by phone or in person with a focus on strength-based model, that recognized her inherent resilience and capability assisted her with both emotional and strategic support.

In addition, the assistance of breaking down her tasks and goals into smaller, manageable steps resonated with the Alpha Court's motto "Turing your recovery steps into leaps." This offered Erin, the ability to regain a sense of control in her life.

Erin also shared, that the referral to the Humanities 101 program, opened the door to a world of possibilities. Which lead her to start to actively connect with the community, and started to volunteer. By doing so she discovered a renewed passion for life.

Erin's commitment to volunteering, led to securing employment within the community, as well has a mentor for Humanities 101. Erin expressed that she is proud of herself, that she can now be the one making the recommendation to attend this program, and bring hope to someone, like Alpha Court did for her.

Erin stated that the consistence, non-judgmental support that she receives from Alpha Court, provides her with the encouragement to build a life for herself. She remarks, that she is reassured when she doubts herself; and also receives small pushes outside of her comfort zone when required.

Alpha Court wants to celebrate her, her hard work and celebrate her success. And note that every small step forward is to a leap to a brighter future. Well done Erin! 💎 – *Written by: Sara Hampel*

Adventure at the CLE!

The Canadian Lakehead Exhibition (CLE) hosted the Annual Special Needs Day on Thursday August 10th, 2023. Admission tickets were distributed 'free of charge' to organizations that were selected, Alpha Court being one of the chosen organizations.

Numerous individuals receiving support services from the agency attended the afternoon event. Hats off to the amazing staff who contributed in every way: the "behind the scene" for liaison with the CLE and ticket count; distributing tickets; attending with individuals, and providing a special touch of encouragement to those who needed additional support! Well done staff!

The afternoon event found people browsing the markets, visiting the Petting Zoo, and indulging in tasty treats from the variety of food vendors. Folks took advantage of getting out of the sun and resting in the Dorothy Dove Building while enjoying musicians and free refreshments.

And of course, free ride wristbands were provided to all to ride on the midway during the heated afternoon hours. One person was with a boisterous crew and she reflected: It was a thrilling afternoon to witness the high energy, pure glee, and team work with ride selection--each had consideration towards the other and it was all about embracing inclusiveness.

Many thanks to the CLE for their generous donation that impacted people in many significant ways with everlasting joyful memories! 💎 – *Written by: Natalie Stobert*



2SLGBTQI+ and Allies Support Group

This spring, Alpha Court introduced a new support group for people who are 2SLGBTQI+ and Allies (significant others, friends, and family members). Our group is known as the **Walking Proud Group**. We meet the 2nd Thursday of each month from 2-4 p.m. at the Alpha Court Day Centre.

The vision for this support group is increased social networking and self-esteem through peer support; thereby, decreasing rejection and alienation resulting from stigma (people's negative views) and discrimination (treating others in a negative way).

The promotion of kindness and inclusion is an essential element for the Walking Proud Group. Some members "coming out" experiences have resulted in family shunning, shaming, and ostracizing from their community (family, peers, employment, recreational, and social etc.). Still others feel ill-at-ease AND we support equality and diversity as we provide a healing environment in an informal safe setting.

Peer connection is key to building one's team of supporters who engage in active listening and collaborative learning through sharing lived experiences. The mental health and educational component provided by the facilitators includes learning coping strategies that leads to empowerment and positive life changes.

Participation at community events this summer was remarkably successful! Together, the members of Walking Proud Group participated in the Pride Parade and Festival on June 17th and the CLE Fair on August 10th. Members spoke of feeling uplifted, empowered, and "a part of" (inclusive factor!). Comments from individuals included, "it was something I always wanted to do but I was too scared to go on my own" and "I had so much fun-can we do this again next year?"

This fall, a Speakers Series will take place at each monthly gathering with an invited guest who will share her/his/their personal 2SLGBTQIA+ life journey. The year will wrap up with a Christmas "Oji" Gift Exchange Party.

If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the Walking Proud Group, please contact the Day Centre or Natalie Stobert @ 683-8200 ext. 3521.

Our Motto... *"We are NOT alone... Together We CAN!"* 💎 – *Written by: Natalie Stobert*

Don't hide your
PRIDE



World Mental Health Day

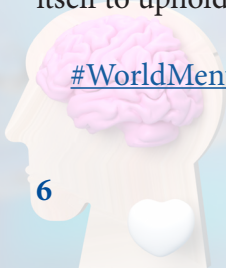
October 10th, 2023 is World Mental Health Day. The message for 2023 is "mental health is a universal human right". The objective of this day is to raise awareness of mental health across the globe. This year brings to light that mental wellness and health is a right of all people. This includes the right to be protected from mental health risks and the right to available, accessible and good quality care.

Having a mental health condition should not preclude people from being empowered to make decisions about their care and health. Unfortunately, the infringement of people's rights to make decisions and participate in community life continues throughout the world. (World Health Organization)

The World Health Organization (WHO) continues to work with stakeholders to ensure mental health is "valued, promoted and protected".

Through our work with the people we serve and our internal practices and policies, Alpha Court commits itself to upholding the belief that mental health is a universal human right of all people. 💎

[#WorldMentalHealthDay](https://wmhdoofficial.com/) World Mental Health Day – October 10th <https://wmhdoofficial.com/>



Orange Shirt Day

Orange Shirt Day is observed annually on September 30th to honour Residential School Survivors and their families, and to remember those who did not make it. It was initiated as a way to keep conversations going about Residential Schools in Williams Lake and the Cariboo Region of British Columbia, Canada. This movement has now expanded across Canada and beyond. Orange Shirt Day was inspired by the story of a Residential School Survivor named Phyllis Webstad.

When Phyllis was six years old she went to an Indian Residential School for the first time wearing a brand new “shiny orange shirt” bought by her Grandmother. When she arrived at the school her shirt was taken away, never to be worn again. To Phyllis Webstad, the colour orange symbolized that she did not matter. Today, she has learned to accept the colour, and even have fun with it, and now the orange shirt has instead become a symbol of hope and reconciliation. By wearing an orange shirt on Orange Shirt Day, you make a powerful statement that Residential Schools were wrong, and you commit to the concept that EVERY CHILD MATTERS. 💧

Source: <https://orangeshirtday.org/phyllis-story/>



Understanding the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

September 30, 2021, marks the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a day that coincides with Orange Shirt Day. It recognizes the tragic legacy of residential schools, the missing children, the families left behind and the survivors of these institutions.

Start your learning journey by exploring the rich and diverse cultures, voices, experiences and histories of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. 💧 *Learn more about the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and the events taking place to mark the day. Visit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/national-day-truth-reconciliation.html>*



3 Tips for Winter Wellness

As the cold winter months approach, it's important that we continue to do things that positively impact our well-being, and maybe even try something new along the way! Below are three tips to help you get started:

Let the sun shine upon you: it may sound cliché but it's important to get outside in the winter just like any other time of year. However, it may be even more important during the winter months (morning is best!) when we have less hours of sunlight during the day. Even if it's just for 10 minutes! This can help regulate your sleep-wake cycle, boost circulation, and improve your mood. Safety first of course; dress in warm layers, wear sunglasses and yes, sunscreen on exposed skin too!

Get creative: winter is a great time of year to start that indoor hobby you've been putting aside all summer because it was "too nice" to be inside. Maybe that's painting, journaling, knitting, cooking, dancing, doing puzzles, or even redecorating a room. Find a hobby that brings you joy and do that! There are likely people out there that enjoy the same hobbies as you, so it can also be nice to make those social connections whether in person or online with those that have similar interests.

Create a comfort care box: if you have a shoebox, basket, or any kind of empty container/bin, you can create your own comfort care box filled with items that bring on that 'warm hug' feeling in the dead of winter. A simple box could include a candle, pictures of friends/family, your favourite chocolate bar or candy, a stuffed animal or small blanket, and a list of your favourite feel-good songs that you can listen to on YouTube or any music app. You can be as creative and extravagant with this as you want! Each item should bring you joyful feelings or elicit a good memory, and you can add or remove items as you see fit. You can also decorate the outside of your box to your liking. A good rule of thumb is to start with 5 items and try incorporating all 5 senses (sight, smell, taste, sound, and touch). Open your box when you feel down or incorporate it more regularly as a daily 15-minute mindfulness exercise; really experience each item and journal what brings you joy about each item on that day. You can make your box solo or you can have a comfort care box party with your closest friends and make it a social event! The sky is the limit, have fun with it! 💡 *Written by: Amanda Orr RSW, MSW*



Tammy Turnbull battles Mother Nature to keep on Rockin'!

Tammy has worked for Alpha Court since April 2016 and is our Drug Awareness Committee (DAC) representative. Tammy has been in the mental health and addiction field since 1999 and is the treasurer for the DAC.

Tammy helps plan and run the annual Rockin' Recovery event each year. Rockin' Recovery Day aims to build awareness, challenge the stigma surrounding addiction, and celebrate recovery's role in every community member's life. Inspirational stories of recovery and sensational music are vital to shifting perceptions around recovery.

September 6th marked 10 years of Rockin' for the Rockin' Recovery event. This year, Mother Nature tried to rain the event out. Tammy and the Rockin' Recovery committee members rallied and found a new location to host the event. Rockin' Recovery's watch party was live-cast at Howl at the Moons Dry Saloon and reached over 2000 people and reached as far as Australia.

Highlights of the event included MC Ron Kanutski, Juno-nominated Canadian folk singer Craig Cardiff, and the storytellers Melissa, Tannice, and Andrew.

For more information or to watch the event, please visit the [Thunder Bay Drug Awareness Facebook page](#). 💡



Thank You BISNO

Brain Injury Services of Northwestern Ontario (BISNO) provides services to people who require rehabilitation and/or life-long support following an acquired brain injury. BISNO has provided this much needed service for 32 years.

For the last twelve years, BISNO has been a steadfast partner at the Alpha Court Day Centre. Every week, Katriona and Michaila facilitate an arts and crafts group aimed to accommodate all artistic styles and preferences. Some of the art projects that have been done in the past include: papier-mâché, rock painting, macramé and melted crayon art.

Through this program, participants have been able to develop social connections, enhance their sense of confidence and further their technical skills in the arts. As seen through the use of Art Therapy, engaging in arts and crafts is also beneficial to physical, mental and spiritual health.

Join us Wednesday afternoon's from 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m at the Day Centre (270 Windsor St, Room 221). You do not need experience with the arts and crafts to participate. Who knows, you might discover some hidden talents.

If you have any questions please contact the Day Centre at (807) 683 – 7729, Jesse James (Ext. 3172) or Sharon Greshuk (Ext. 3176). 💡



Coordinated Testing & Housing Blitz

Elevate NWO put on three Coordinated Testing and Housing Blitz' in Thunder Bay on July 13, July 25, and August 30th 2023.

The primary goal was to reach people residing in encampments. Booths were set up to complete the following: Birth certificate applications, RGI Housing applications, VI-SPDAT, & STI/BBI testing. The following agencies were present at the Blitz's: Elevate NWO, TBDSSAB, Alpha Court Community Mental Health & Addiction Services, TBDHU, John Howard Society, Kinna-aweya Legal Clinic.

Alpha Court workers were present to complete the VI-SPDAT's which is a tool to examine factors of current vulnerability and future housing stability.



Here are the stats for all the Coordinated Testing & Housing Blitz's

July 13th, 2023:

Birth Certificates - 42; RGI Housing Applications - 32; VI-SPDATs - 23; POC Testing - 47

Total Intakes - 69

July 25th, 2023:

Birth Certificates - 85; POC Testing – 86 (Individuals tested); VI-SPDATs - 68; RGI Housing Applications - 45;

Total Intakes - 129

August 30th, 2023:

Birth Certificates - 40; RGI Housing Applications - 28; Vi-SPDATs - 26; POC Testing - 50

Total Intakes - 76

Total Numbers for the 3 Blitz's:

Birth Certificates - 167; RGI Housing Applications - 105; VI-SPDATS - 117; POC Testing: 183

Total Intakes: 274

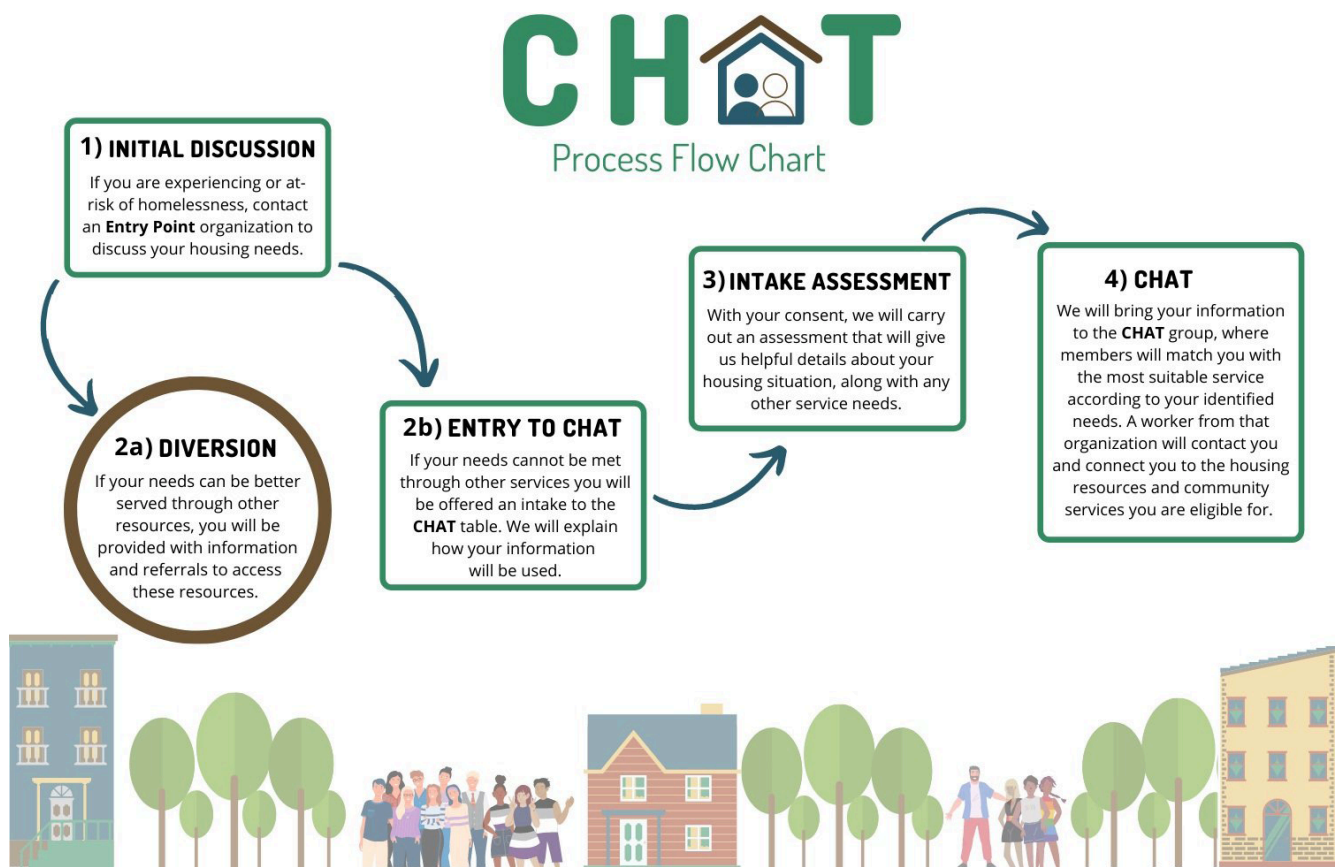
Did you Know?

Thunder Bay has a Coordinated Housing Access Table (CHAT). A group of service providers, who offer housing and/or housing support services and resources to individuals or families who are experiencing homelessness, have formed a committee to assist people who are experiencing homelessness find housing and support.

People who are experiencing homelessness and are not currently receiving support to find housing can visit one of a number of entry points to meet and discuss their housing needs and complete an assessment which helps the CHAT committee make decisions around services and prioritization.

This initiative is a great example of how service providers can collaborate to fill a gap and provided services in a streamlined and easily accessible manner.

For more information, please see the website at tbaychat.com or call Moneka at 807-620-0825.



Definitions

- **CHAT** — Coordinated Housing Access Table
- **Diversion** — if an individual or family can be served by an organization they are currently working with, or if better served by resources outside CHAT, they will be directed to those resources
- **Entry Point** — locations throughout the community that offer CHAT intake assessments. The same assessment is carried out at all Entry Point options
- **VI-SPDAT** (Vulnerability Indicator - Service Priority Determining Assessment Tool) — a component of the intake assessment that enables the intake worker to determine severity of the individual or family's circumstances
- **HIFIS** — Homeless Individuals and Families Information System—database used to track services and referrals for people experiencing homelessness that the federal government uses to allocate funding resources



Photo by: Christine



Photo by: Sharon



Photo by: Adrianna



Photo by: Joleen



Photo by: Aliyah



Photo by: Nicole