

Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre services have a significant impact on our community. When a family is in crisis they may access many agencies to help with their crisis, uniquely with Merrymount we can support the whole family in many different ways. We support parent mental health through providing respite care for their children with our Crisis Respite Residential Program and the Family Child Support Program. We provide parenting, children's groups and counseling support through our Family Resource Program. This group programming and counseling support helps parents to strengthening their attachment relationship with their children and building their parenting skills. In our children's groups' children can strengthen their social skills and build their resiliency skills. Through a service coordination model we work with the family at their lead to direct the services that they need as they rebuild and repair their family.

Merrymount has staff that is skilled in the areas of Early Childhood Education, Child and Youth Care, Resource Consultation, Art and Play Therapy, Parent Education and Counseling. We have volunteers and students that seek out Merrymount to add to their experiences, knowledge and training. In an agency with such multi disciplinary expertise we can provide rich experiences to student and interns looking to practice their skills and learn about family mental health. We have solid partnerships with the College and Universities in South Western Ontario. Through these partnerships we maintain up to date research and excellence in program development that filters to better services to our families.

When we think about a crisis in a family we know that the timeline in needing help is not a set number of sessions or a set length of time. Merrymount services allow families to set their own healing path at their own pace. In comparison when we are building something we want it to be strong and sustainable we need glue that will hold materials together. When I think of our community there are many social service agencies that are the building blocks for families and we are one of them; but with Merrymount they are also the glue that holds the families and the services together. This in the end creates a structure that is safe, secure, protected and provides the time needed to heal and strengthen.

Through all my years of working in social service I have never encountered another agency like Merrymount. There is not an agency in the community that we do not work with in some way either in co facilitating programs, hosting workshops, providing support groups in their neighbourhoods or in our schools. At out of town conferences other colleagues are amazed at the services Merrymount provides to the community. They wish they had a service in their community like Merrymount and our conversations often end with the comment "all communities need a Merrymount." I can't imagine where we would be as a community without Merrymount and could not imagine how we can do this work with families without Merrymount services. This is an essential agency in London and it needs to be nurtured and supported to allow it to service all the families that need Merrymount.

Sincerely,

Sarah Wells

BA, CTS, Parent & Child Group Facilitator
Adjunct Professor of Field Practice Education
Merrymount Family Support and Crisis Centre