

January 7, 2019

To whom it may concern,

My name is Catherine Foote and I have been a staff member for 32 years at Merrymount Support and Crisis Centre. I feel confident in expressing my full support for Merrymount programs and services in the areas of Family Resource, Crisis Residential/ Respite programs and Family Child Support Programs.

During my 32 years of service to this organization I have been involved in all the above mentioned programs. Programs have evolved and grown throughout the years but one thing that has remained consistent is Merrymount's commitment to serving and supporting families in London and surrounding areas.

In my role as an Art Therapist providing psycho-educational group programs to identified groups of children I have observed firsthand the benefits of such programs. Children attending Mom's House Dad's House a group that provides education and support for children whose families are experiencing separation and divorce benefit from being with other children who are going through a similar experience and understanding they are not alone in this situation. In an evaluation completed by the Centre of Excellence in 2013 the following outcomes for children were identified. Two significant differences were noted during the duration of the program: children felt listened to by other children when they shared their feelings, and children believed the future would be better in relation to changes the family was experiencing. By providing groups that are early intervention/prevention that promote self-esteem and resiliency we are helping families build resilience which is at the core of Merrymount groups. Children attending groups explore their strengths, recognize their strengths and recognize the strengths in others and their communities. By offering groups in community children are able to access support that might otherwise be a challenge for families and thus provide further opportunity for parental engagement.

Without early intervention and prevention programs being offered to support children and their families their trajectory is changed and children who currently have access to such programs will now have limited access to supports and put children at further risk.

Sincerely,

Catherine Foote

Merrymount