**Communications Plan**

**Peel Region Family Justice and Child Advocacy Centre**

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 For: Louise Mussio**

**Executive Summary**
The following plan was devised to help the Family Justice and Child Advocacy Center in Peel region to increase public awareness about its services. The plan targets victims of domestic violence, new immigrants, potential donors and non-Catholic audiences. The objectives of the plan are to: increase public awareness of the FJ/CAC, change inherent religious misconceptions of the FJ/CAC’s services and increase online engagement. Strategies include media relations (devising press kit and feature stories), partnering with religious groups (informational meetings and ethnic media) and increasing web presence (Facebook Fan Page and website). Evaluation of the plan includes media monitoring, online visits, listening to conversations and support services attendance in September 2011, after the FJ/CAC’s grand opening in August 2011.

**Situation Analysis**
The Family Justice and Child Advocacy Centre Planning Group is currently preparing to open a Family Justice and Child Advocacy Centre in Peel region. The FJ/CAC will provide low cost, co-located support services for victims of domestic violence. Due to a lack of communication human resources and no formal communications plan the FJ/CAC has limited communications outreach. The goal of this campaign is to spread awareness about the FJ/CAC before its opening in August 2011.

A key word search of the Peel region Family Justice and Child Advocacy Centre on Google reveals the current state of the FJ/CAC’s online presence. The first search “hit” reveals that the FJ/CAC has an engaging and regularly updated Face Book Fan Page. The Fan Page includes pictures, status updates and information about the new centre. However, the Fan Page only has 25 “likes” suggesting that it doesn’t have successful reach and isn’t generating exposure. A key word search also reveals that the FJ/CAC has garnered media attention, as the search returns several related news articles. It also reveals that the FJ/CAC does not have a website.

Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin is a multi-service counselling agency committed to improving the lives of individuals, families and the community at large. CFSPD has served the Peel region for 29 years, has established itself as leader in social justice services and is instrumental in the development of the FJ/CAC. The affiliation of the new FJ/CAC with the CFSPD exposes an obvious strength of as well as a possible threat to reaching its potential success. A brand association with the CFSPD gives the centre inherent credibility. The CFSPD is not only active in bettering the community, the CFSPD is also supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation giving it third party assurance. There is also an imposed threat that an association with Catholic ideals may deter potential clients. As clients from opposing religions might be wary of seeking Catholic support, believing there could be religious intentions or conflicts. The FJ/CAC planning group needs to create communications targeting ethnic audiences to ensure victims of domestic violence do not have any religious reservations about seeking help.

The FJ/CAC is a proven best-practice model in social justice services and has been incorporated successfully by over 900 centres worldwide. The FJ/CAC needs to communicate the benefits of co-located, integrated family and child services to victims of domestic violence to attract those in need. This means communicating to the public the success rates of past centres. The FJ/CAC has the opportunity to build its public reputation and gain credibility by formulating communications initiatives to reach its intended audience. The objectives of this communication plan were devised based on the findings discovered in the following SWOT analysis.

**Strengths**

* Provides a wide range of support including counseling, legal advice and social services.
* Research proves that family justice and child adocacy centres are highly successful.
	+ Adopted by over 900 centres worldwide.
* Childcare is available for individuals attending support services.
* The centre will feature brand new facilities, crafted to the needs of each individual service.
	+ Included in the plans are state-of-the-art “child minding rooms,” so visitors can watch their children while seeking support services.
* The centre has ample parking facilities and is easily accessible by public transit.
* Services will be provided in over 100 languages through the use of a free of charge video conferencing interpreter service.
* CFSPD has a highly recognizable positive reputation in the Peel-Dufferin region. The brand affiliation of the new centre with a reputable and community involved organization could work to help raise the centre’s credibility to attract potential charitable donors.
* CFSPD is lead agency with support from Ontario Trillium Foundation.

**Weaknesses**

* The lack of dedicated staff to communications related activities will make it more difficult to produce communication materials.
* There has been some media coverage, but overall awareness about the centre is low.
* Although well crafted, the FJ/CAC’s Facebook Fan Page has a poor community following.
* The FJ/CAC does not have a website, limiting its ability to control its messaging and educate the community about its services.

**Opportunities**

* Peel region is the second largest municipality in Ontario with a population of over 1.15 million residents and a high volume of immigration. According to Peel Regional Police there were 13,000 domestic violence cases report in 2009 in Peel region.  High demand exists for services. The centre has the opportunity to help victims of domestic violence by offering a variety of support services to make a positive change in the Peel region.
* The FJ/CAC in Peel region will be the first centre of its kind available in a Canadian major metropolitan area. This creates an opportunity to develop a blueprint for the services they offer customized to the unique needs of the entire Canadian population.
* The centre is interested in developing made in Peel solutions and can position itself as a national industry leader in offering family justice and child advocacy programs.
* Victims of domestic violence become overwhelmed by the processes involved in registering and dealing with a variety of issues stemming from domestic violence. The FJ/CAC has the opportunity to appeal to Peel residents as it offers a variety of family justice services under one roof and operates using the same administration staff, making registration easier.

**Threats**

* The diversity of the population in terms of ethnicity, primary language and religion creates potential barriers to promotional, awareness communication efforts.
* Some visitors may be apprehensive about using FJ/CAC services because of the connection to the Catholicism.  Visitors may be concerned about seeking advice and support because they may feel that there is a religious agenda at work within the centre.
* The FJ/CAC could potentially face political challenges by providing family rehabilitation services for victims of domestic violence. The centre could be faced with opposing political views, as many social justice advocates believe that abusers should be removed from families.

**Objectives**
The FJ/CAC’s communication goal is to spread awareness about the benefits of co-located family justice and child advocacy services. The FJ/CAC hopes to communicate its passionate vision for offering support services and bettering the lives of the community at large.

**Objective One: Increase awareness about the FJ/CAC’s integrated family support services before the grand opening in August 2011.**

Considerations: Since the Peel region has a diverse ethnic and religious population, the FJ/CAC needs to address language and religious barriers. Domestic violence is a sensitive issue in the community and all communications need to adhere to privacy considerations. Awareness communications should be informative and communicate the vision of FJ/CAC.

**Objective Two: Address potential religious misconceptions about the FJ/CAC and clarify the partnership role of Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin.**

Considerations: Although Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin is a credible organization with high brand recognition in the Peel region, its association with Catholicism could potentially discourage victims from seeking support services. Special considerations need to be taken to address potential misconceptions about a catholic influence on support services. Diverse religious audiences must understand services are fully inclusive and not limited to Catholics alone.

**Objective Three: Increase online media visits from Peel residents in order to increase community engagement through conversations and online presence.**

Considerations: Using online communication tools will give the centre the potential to reach a large audience. As the Internet is the most used source of information in Canada today, the FJ/CAC needs to ensure that the public can access information about its services online. Social media engagement can help FJ/CAC to foster relationships by cultivating conversations online in order to influence and gain support from community members.

**Audiences**
The client identified its target audiences as:

* People who could benefit from the services
* Possible Donors
* Diverse Communities

**Victims of Domestic Violence**This is a sensitive audience but also a crucial one. It is imperative to communicate that the FJ/CAC will offer a variety of accessible support services in order to encourage attendance from victims of domestic violence.

Key Message: The FJ/CAC provides integrated co-located support services including counseling, social and legal services. The FJ/CAC is accessible by public transit and support services and childcare are available for children.

**New Immigrants**Peel region has the second highest immigrant population in Canada. Immigrants make up around 48 per cent of Peel region’s population. Immigrants are faced with language barriers that can limit access to help, which is why the FJ/CAC needs to communicate its support services to ensure no community member is left in the dark.

Key Message: The FJ/CAC offers domestic violence support services to individuals and their families including counseling, social and legal services. Services can be accessed in over 100 languages, as the FJ/CAC has the ability to access interpreters through free-of-charge video conferencing.

**Charitable Donors**The client addressed donors as a possible audience for communications about the FJ/CAC. At this time the FJ/CAC has a generous grant from private and government funding. However, in order to maintain and possibly improve the services in the future, the FJ/CAC would benefit from charitable donations. It is essential to attract potential donor attention during the launch of the FJ/CAC to establish an early brand recognition and reputation.

Key Message: Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin is the lead partner of the Family Justice and Child Advocacy Centre. Catholic Family Services of Peel-Dufferin is a registered charity and is supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. FJ/CAC will be instrumental in bettering the lives of the Peel region community at large.

**Non-Catholics**
The execution of communications needs to dismiss possible misconceptions that the FJ/CAC is strictly for Catholics. This audience needs to be addressed directly in order to ensure that the FJ/CAC can reach out to all victims of domestic violence.

Key message: FJ/CAC offers support services for victims of domestic violence regardless of religious beliefs. The FJ/CAC does not have any religious intentions (no plans to impose religious bias and beliefs) other than to improve the lives of the community at large.

**Strategies**
**Strategy One: Target local, provincial and national media outlets to increase awareness about the FJ/CAC.**
This strategy addresses the campaign’s objective to increase awareness about the centre. Though the FJ/CAC has had media coverage to date, further media impressions are needed. Targeting diverse, ethnic local media is an effective strategy to reach immigrant audiences. Where provincial and national media outlets could assist in spreading awareness to a wider audience range. Overall, media attention is needed to gain public exposure for the FJ/CAC services. Media attention is needed to attract possible charitable donor interest from the province of Ontario at large.

**Strategy Two: Develop partnerships with diverse ethnic leaders in the Peel region to advocate for the FJ/CAC and address any reservations about or misconceptions of Catholic involvement in the centre.**

This strategy addresses the campaign’s attitudinal objective to dismiss misconceptions about the role of Catholic influence in the execution of the FJ/CAC. Conducting outreach to the immigrant community, through ethnicity affiliations, would serve a double purpose for the centre. It would provide an opportunity to communicate that the FJ/CAC’s services are not restricted to, or based off of Catholic religious beliefs. It also presents an opportunity to educate the local diverse community on other aspects of the new centre.

**Strategy Three: Devise and develop an online presence for the FJ/CAC in order to cultivate relationships and encourage conversations.**

By managing and creating an effective online presence, the FJ/CAC has an opportunity to develop an organizational identity. Social media can be used to foster two-way communication with the community and help to spread awareness about the FJ/CAC. Developing a hub for curious community members and possible donors to read in-depth information about the FJ/CAC’s services is essential to create credibility and professionalism.

**Tactics**
**Strategy One: Target local, provincial and national media outlets to increase awareness about the FJ/CAC.**
Tactic One: Develop a media kit complete with a backgrounder outlining the successful findings of research studies exploring the societal benefits of the integrated FJ/CAC’s model. Include a fact sheet outlining information about each agency partnered with the FJ/CAC in order to inform journalists about the many services available to local Peel and Ontario residents.

The media kit can be distributed to local, provincial and national media outlets in order to gain earned media for the FJ/CAC. The media kit can be produced in an online format and emailed to journalists as well. This tactic can be measured by monitoring media impressions using software such as CisionPoint. However, if the FJ/CAC does not want to purchase an account, it can also set up a Google Alerts for the FJ/CAC in order to compile a list of critical online media impressions.

By targeting the media as an outlet for transmitting information, the FJ/CAC can increase its awareness to key audiences. This includes possible victims of domestic violence as well as charitable donors. Gaining media coverage can inform and spark curiosity in charitable donors, which could eventually lead to brand recognition of the FJ/CAC and in turn lead donors to remember the FJ/CAC when making future donation decisions.

**Tactic Two) Invite local media to a press conference at the grand opening of the FJ/CAC in August 2011.** This will provide an opportunity to communicate key messages to media as well as allow media the opportunity to ask questions, acquire visuals and allow the client to control the messages being disseminated throughout Peel region.

This could also give the FJ/CAC adequate public exposure, as media alerts for the grand opening event could be sent to many different media outlets including CBC Radio, the National broadcast media as well as print media. The FJ/CAC could offer tours of the facilities in order to give the media photo opportunities. In order to create interest and attraction to the media, the FJ/CAC could ask the honourable William Davis, 18th Premiere of Ontario, to speak and demonstrate his support and assurance of the services of the FJ/CAC. This assurance from a well-known member of Canadian society could provide a unique incentive to media to attend the grand opening event. It could also gain the attention of prominent figures in the donor audience. Coverage of the event could attract possible donors as well as disseminate information to victims of domestic violence.

This tactic can be measured through media monitoring of online, radio and television impressions using CisionPoint. Additionally, to measure the turn out of media outlets the FJ/CAC can create a media sign-in list. This can help the FJ/CAC measure the success of its media alert in garnering media interest as well as it could give an indication of the amount of media coverage the event will obtain.

**Strategy Two: Develop partnerships with diverse ethnic leaders in the Peel region to advocate for the FJ/CAC and address any reservations about or misconceptions of Catholic involvement in the centre.****Tactic One) Conduct informational meetings at places of worship around Peel region.** The FJ/CAC can partner with local religious leaders in order to disseminate key messages to immigrant populations as well as possible multi-faith victims of domestic violence. Religious leaders can translate the messages in native language in order to break down language barriers to receiving information. These meetings could present the FJ/CAC with an opportunity to build relationships and trust from the diverse immigrant population of Peel. The meetings could also ensure that victims of domestic violence, from diverse ethnicities, can be informed about the support services offered in over 100 different languages. Partnering with prominent religious figures in diverse ethnic communities can also build third party assurance for the FJ/CAC as well as dispel any misconceptions that FJ/CAC services are limited to catholic audiences.

Measurement can be based on the number of faith centres visited by FJ/CAC staff. Also the FJ/CAC can scan the audiences at the informational meetings to measure the public exposure and success at each religious place of worship. Additionally, the FJ/CAC can gain feedback from religious leaders by word for word translations of conversations with immigrant audiences. This can give the FJ/CAC an idea of the affect its had on reaching diverse audiences with information, as well as it can measure and gather attitudinal beliefs from immigrant populations by listening to insightful conversations.

**Tactic Two) Develop feature stories and press releases to distribute for publication in Peel region foreign language faith-based populations.** The client communicated that she was pursuing a business transaction with “diversity media services” which is a service that works to contact diverse, multi-cultural media services, newspapers etc. The client should continue to pursue this deal, as ethnic media impressions could increase the outreach to immigrant as well as non-Catholic audiences. By writing the feature stories and press release for distribution to ethnic media outlets, the FJ/CAC can have control over its reputation and dissemination of information in the media. The feature stories should have an inclusive voice in order to dissuade social misconceptions about the Catholic influence and involvement in FJ/CAC’s services. The feature stories should communicate that the FJ/CAC’s support services are open to the entire community, regardless of ethnicity or religious beliefs. Evaluation for the success of ethnic media outreach can be measured by conducting media monitoring to calculate media impressions.

**Strategy Three: Devise and develop an online presence for the FJ/CAC in order to cultivate relationships and encourage conversations.****Tactic One) Engage users on Facebook Fan Page with online discussions to educate the community about the FJ/CAC.** The current Facebook Fan Page is constructed very well and has the potential to be an engaging online tool for the FJ/CAC. However, the page only has 25 “likes” which suggests that there needs to be more done to create online exposure. Perhaps the FJ/CAC could use discussion boards on the Fan Page to encourage two-way communication, by seeking input from the community.

Effectiveness of this tactic can be measured through activity levels on the discussion boards, and number of unique page visits to the Facebook Fan Page. Facebook provides tracking tools within its’ platform, so no extra cost will be needed to address metrics. Also, measurement can be gauged from the conversations online. The FJ/CAC needs to listen to conversations online and ensure to respond to questions in a consistent, timely fashion.

**Tactic Two) Develop a website to communicate key messages to audiences about the benefits and concept of integrated family, co-located services.** As explained in the SWOT analysis, the FJ/CAC does not have website, which is severely limiting its communications efforts. Online users value the ease of information and accessibility of websites. Without a website, the FJ/CAC cannot gain sufficient online exposure. The FJ/CAC needs to manage its online presence to take control of its messaging and branding. Its online presence needs to be informative, engaging and frequently updated.

Victims seeking refuge and support from domestic violence most likely will access the Internet to find available services in the Peel region. It is important that the FJ/CAC is the first “hit” victims get when entering a Google search of “family justice and child advocacy services Peel.” Victims of domestic violence will require information about its services and a website is an easy tool to navigate and to deliver in-depth information. By creating a website for itself, the FJ/CAC can manage its online presence and increase its potential audience exposure. Also, charitable donating could eventually be incorporated into the website. Charitable donors will be more likely to donate a cause if the organization has a reputable and well written website. In the future the FJ/CAC could provide a PayPal link or a link to the Canadian Registered Charities website, to make secure donations.

The development of the website can include a link to the Facebook Fan Page in order to direct users to the FJ/CAC’s social media efforts. This could potentially increase the “likes” on the Facebook Fan Page and in turn increase the Facebook Fan Page’s effectiveness at creating dialogue with the community.

Methods of measurement can be obtained by website visits as well as an increase in Facebook Fan Page “likes” (should the FJ/CAC choose to add a link to the Facebook Fan Page). As well as, if the website is developed with a “contact us” page, the FJ/CAC staff can review conversations and inquires to measure public interest in the FJ/CAC.

**Evaluation**
Media monitoring of the campaign should be used frequently throughout the campaign. This includes Google key word searches as well as using a national media monitoring service such as CisionPoint. This can help to measure the media impressions of the campaign and can help evaluate whether the campaign’s media relations efforts were effective.

Facebook Fan Page “likes” as well as website visits should be monitored for progress. Reference the number of “likes” at the end of August 2011 with the 25 “likes” as of April 7. This will give the FJ/CAC an indication of the successfulness of the Facebook Fan Page communication initiative. In addition to monitoring online media metrics, the FJ/CAC must explore online conversations through the website and Facebook Fan Page. Conversations communicate the outcomes of the communications initiatives. If audiences are asking questions or seeking support service requests, these behaviours correlate to a successful campaign. If Peel residents are engaged in conversations about and seeking services at the FJ/CAC than the objectives of increasing awareness, changing misconceptions and increasing community engagement have been fulfilled.

A method of evaluation that the FJ/CAC may consider formulating is a visitor survey. This can be designed to measure responses from visitors as to how they heard about the services. This measurement tool can be easily incorporated into the FJ/CAC’s registration operations. The FJ/CAC can include a question within the registration forms that visitors fill-out before seeking services at the FJ/CAC. The question could ask visitors to indicate, if possible, specifically where they first heard about the FJ/CAC’s services. This can give the client an understanding of which strategies worked best at reaching indented audiences.

**Budget Recommendations**The devised tactics are fairly low-cost. Some money will need to be allocated to the development of a media kit. In order to create an effective media kit, the client should consider having the kit professionally printed, which will include colour printing and casing for the kit. Depending on the clients familiarity with website design, the FJ/CAC might consider hiring a web developer or even a web designer student to start the efforts. The client can write all the copy including mission statement, values and vision and the web designer can include the copy in the design of the website. Also, if the FJ/CAC wants to purchase a subscription to CisionPoint, it should allocate money in the budget for this purpose.

The client may want to consider hiring an assistant to help with devising communication materials and executing communications initiatives. If the FJ/CAC wants to create a communications department to handle external messaging, it may want to consider allocating a portion of its budget to human resources in order to recruit communications staff. However, if the client doesn’t have enough budget to assemble staff, the FJ/CAC could consider recruiting an intern or volunteer from a public relations or communications program. College and University students are always looking to build resumes and gain experience and also have a practical, fresh knowledge of how to execute communications initiatives.