



Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth

Centre of Excellence for Residential Care in Ontario

The Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth's In Harm's Way? Serious Occurrences Report Vol. 2 Statement of the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth

The Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth (OARTY) is a voluntary provincial association of private residential services, including residential treatment centres, group homes, foster and treatment foster homes. OARTY member agencies are committed to ensuring that their services are based on best practice and the highest standards of care.

On December 12th, the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth released [In Harm's Way? Serious Occurrences Report Volume 2](#). The report is the second in a series by the Advocate's Office which analyzed 4,436 Serious Occurrence Reports (SORs) submitted to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services over a three-month period (January 1, 2014 – March 31, 2014).

OARTY would like to thank the Provincial Advocate's Office for undertaking this review and analysis of SORs, and for bringing their recommendations to improve the system forward. OARTY is a strong believer in research, utilizing data as a performance indicator, and continually evaluating service to ensure the best possible outcomes for all children and youth in care.

The report captures many issues with SORs that OARTY has previously brought forward to the Ministry including the need to clarify what constitutes the complete and consistent reporting of SOs to avoid reporting inconsistencies in terms of content and categorization, and the need to revise the form itself to support this process.

The report notes that the content of SORs "*should be of utmost importance to the government, children's aid societies, placing agencies, and residential service providers because they can identify trends and patterns, provide assurance that a particular incident was dealt with appropriately, or convey early warning of potential problems.*" This fits with OARTY's view of monitoring outcomes and engaging in continuous quality improvement. Best practice indicates that operators should be reviewing their SORs on a regular basis to determine trends and patterns, and following up on any areas of concern to improve policy and practice within their agency.

The report is proof of concept that a well-designed SO report template would allow for the more accurate collection of data, which could be analyzed for trends in service practice. We strongly support the recommendation that the SO form should be redeveloped in a manner which ensures consistency and clarity in reporting. As recommended, the redevelopment of the form should also include province-wide training to ensure that all services providers are aware of their responsibilities to fully and completely report serious occurrences. Ministry staff who are tasked with reviewing SO reports should also be trained, including training on the acceptable restraint methods and their responsibility to ensure that service providers are meeting the standards set.

The report deals with the data collected regarding restraint in great detail. We were concerned to see that there appears to be some agencies using a "copy and paste" technique when filling out SO reports - this needs to be addressed immediately. All SO reports need to include clear and descriptive language that allows the reader to inform an accurate depiction of events.

The report also brings forward some concerns around the debriefing process following a restraint and how this is reported through the SOR process. In practice, debriefings often occur following the submission of an SOR. Effective debriefing occurs on an ongoing basis and as such is not adequately captured as a one-time event. Further consideration needs to be given as to how to report on the debriefing process to ensure that it is meeting the needs of everyone involved in (or witness to) a restraint.

We have encouraged all our members to read the report and consider how the data collected reflects on their own agency data to determine if there are any areas in which they can improve their practice. We have also encouraged all our member agencies to wherever possible/applicable take the following steps on a go-forward basis to address some of the concerns highlighted in the report:

1. When documenting a restraint, make sure you use clear and descriptive reporting that includes information regarding:
 - a. the imminent risk that is present
 - b. any disabilities the young person may have
 - c. what de-escalation techniques were utilized prior to restraint
 - d. what training program technique was utilized
 - e. the staff involved (ex. their position, the restraint training they have received)
 - f. If the child has expressed concerns during the restraint with their physical safety what measures were taken
 - g. the perspective of the young person
2. Review the language you are using not only in your reporting but in all aspects of your practice, to ensure it is appropriate and child-centred.
3. Review with your staff who are responsible for reviewing the SORs submitted the necessity of reading each SOR in detail and following up for additional details if necessary.
4. If you are not already doing so, regularly review all SORs submitted from your agency to identify trends or patterns and to determine if there are any areas for improvement.

OARTY is committed to continuing to work with our partners to improve the sector and to improve outcomes for children and youth. We look forward to working with our partners to implement the recommendations included in this report, in a manner that supports best practice and continuous quality improvement.