



Mental Health

Housing

Employment Services



# Mental Health Services

## Client Handbook

What to expect and your rights as a client of Starling Community Services

For Day/live-in treatment, emergency department diversion,  
community mental health, and psychology services

[starlingcs.ca](http://starlingcs.ca)

## Table of Contents

### General

Introduction.....	3
Service Agreement .....	4
What We Mean by "Voluntary Service" .....	4
Privacy and Consent .....	5
Rights and Responsibilities .....	9
Risks and Benefits of Participation .....	10
Client Complaint Process.....	11
Community Advisory Committee .....	12
What to Expect from the Live-in or Day Treatment Program .....	12
What to Expect from Community Mental Health .....	18
What to Expect from Psychology Services .....	19

## **Introduction**

Where we deliver our services, our goal is to give people the tools, strategies, and confidence they need to cope with their struggles. Our mental health treatment programs work to build on each individual's unique strengths and needs. We develop service and treatment plans using therapeutic relationships and best practices that help people to achieve their goals. In addition, we use an individualized and strength-based approach in the work we do to support young people and their families. We also consider and respect cultural, ethnic, spiritual, and religious traditions and encourage people to engage in opportunities for personal growth and development.

Working together, we see positive changes in the lives of the individuals and families who turn to us for help.

Our mental health services are expanding with culturally aware staff, and we continually educate ourselves on the diverse needs of our community. We invite you to read more about Starling Community Services, our Mission, Vision, and Values, and about our commitment to Anti-Racism and Land-Acknowledgement throughout our website at [www.starlingcs.ca](http://www.starlingcs.ca).

Our tagline is our commitment to you: Caring People. Strengthening Lives.

## **Service Agreement**

In order to participate in Starling Community Services programs, clients must sign a Service Agreement that confirms:

1. They wish to receive service from Starling Community Services.
2. Treatment is voluntary.
3. They understand the agreement clearly.

This agreement clearly outlines Starling's responsibilities and commitments to our clients, as well as client responsibilities while participating in our programs.

At any time, for any reason, service may be stopped by the client. If we are concerned that the agreement is not being maintained, we will contact you and ask for your continued commitment to the program. Should you not wish to provide it, we can assume that you are withdrawing your voluntary consent to participate in the program.

If there is any confusion or lack of clarity, do not hesitate to ask questions and share your concerns with us.

### **What We Mean by "Voluntary Service"**

If you are under 16 years of age both you and your parent(s)/caregiver(s) will be required to give consent to enter service voluntarily. If consent is not given by both you and your parent, we will try to assist in problem-solving and finding a resolution. In some instances, there are steps that may be taken when parents see a clear need to obtain help for their child and the child is unwilling.

If you are over the age of 12 and want individual service without family involvement, this can be provided, and your wishes respected.

## **Privacy and Consent**

Starling Community Services takes privacy very seriously and is committed to protecting the trust and privacy of everyone by being transparent and accountable in how we treat your information. We follow privacy principles as outlined in the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA). If you have any questions about our privacy safeguards, please ask your worker or ask to speak with our Privacy Officer.

### **Purpose for Collecting Personal Health Information in Mental Health Services**

To provide live-in and day treatment services designed for you, we need to collect practical and personal information such as your current and past health and wellness. This includes physical and mental health, education, family history and other services that have or are supporting you. We use this information for the purpose of assessment, treatment, goal setting, and safety planning. Sometimes this information is used to connect you with other community services that can help support you.

We receive government funding to offer these programs and services in our community. Our funder requires us to report non-identifiable aggregate (just numbers) data so they can monitor the quality of services being provided. Our funder also collects personally identifiable information about you if we must report on a serious occurrence.

### **Direct and Indirect Collection of Information**

We collect information from you directly. There may be circumstances where we collect information from others about you when it reduces risk or when it is not possible to collect it from you directly in an accurate, complete and/or timely manner.

### **Your Right to Access Your Records**

You have the right to access to your file. You may request to see and/or receive a copy of information from your file. Certain exceptions apply as outlined in our access to records policy and will be explained to you at the time of request.

### **Your Right and Responsibility to an Accurate File**

You are responsible to provide accurate and up-to-date information and have the right to correct and update information in your files. You may request that staff make corrections to your records where the record is shown to be incomplete or inaccurate. Staff may require that you put the request in writing to ensure accuracy of changes.

### **Storage of Records**

Your records may be in paper and/or electronic format. Paper files are kept in a locked file cabinet within a locked room. Electronic files are part of a web-based system that has many

security features in place. Your file cannot be accessed by anyone without an assigned and secure password.

Your files are kept for as long as required by standards and legislation. You may ask your worker how long records are kept specific to your program area.

## **Your Informed Consent**

A consent is your verbal or written permission allowing us to ask for and/or share information with specific agencies, organizations, or individuals. An "informed" consent for collection use and release of information, means that the purpose has been explained to you in language and format that is understandable to you.

## **Your Implied or Understood Consent**

We would like you to be aware that as a participant in a Starling Community Services program or service, your personal health information may be shared with other relevant Starling Community Services staff members and joint service delivery partner staff who are working with you and your care team.

## **Your Verbal or Written Consent**

For staff to either collect information or talk to third party such as a counsellor, family doctor, school, caseworker, landlord etc., we ask for your verbal and/or written permission or 'consent.'

## **Limits to Confidentiality**

We will not disclose your information to any third party without consent except where required by law, where failure to do so might result in serious injury or death of self or others, or where there is knowledge or suspicion of child abuse. More details can be found in the Service Agreement for your program.

## **Your Right to Withdraw or Withhold Consent**

Consent can be withdrawn at any time by informing us in writing. Once consent is withdrawn, we can no longer seek or share information. Withdrawal of consent cannot reverse any action that was already taken with your previous consent.

## **Electronic Communication Consent**

**(as per Service Agreement)**

Starling Community Services recognizes that the use of technology can be a timely and friendly way to communicate however before we agree to communicate via email or text, it is important that everyone understands and accepts the risks and guidelines involved.

The privacy and security of electronic communication through email and smart phones cannot be guaranteed. To ensure that all confidential information is secure, you are advised to use password protection on all electronic devices.

Electronic communication is not always the best way to communicate. At times a face-to-face meeting with staff may be suggested.

You are encouraged to always double check where you have addressed an email or text before sending, as it can be misaddressed and sent to unintended or unknown persons.

Staff's email address or contact information is not to be included in any mailing lists. If this occurs, it may result in not being allowed to continue electronic communication with Starling Community Services' staff.

Deleted emails may not be permanently deleted; back-up copies may exist on a computer or in cyberspace.

Emails can introduce viruses into a computer system and potentially damage the files. Emails can be viewed by Starling Community Services IT staff for security purposes.

Emails and text messages will be summarized and entered into your file as part of your record. Client records can be used as evidence in court. All copies of emails will be deleted by Starling Community Services.

No phone or online video software is entirely secure. Starling Community Services computer systems have strong internal security, which helps protect your privacy and confidentiality. Starling Community Services will not be responsible for breaches of your confidential information if they are not the direct result of intentional misconduct.

There is no guarantee that staff will respond to email or text messages immediately. If you need immediate assistance please do not call your worker, call 911 or seek assistance in other ways appropriate.

You are asked to inform your worker of any changes to your email/text address.

## **Phone & Video Services**

### **(as per Service Agreement)**

The use of technology can sometimes be a helpful way to provide service to you and your family, when meeting in person is not possible or suitable. However, before we agree to offer services (such as support or therapy) through phone or video options, it is important that you and your family understand and accept the risks and guidelines involved.

To ensure your privacy, you should choose a private and quiet place where our conversation cannot be overheard, and you are free from distraction. When meeting by phone or video, there is a risk of others finding out about you working with Starling Community Services if you did not want them to know.

1. You are asked not to record the session without the direct permission of everyone involved.
2. All individuals present for the phone or video session must be within view of the camera or acknowledge their presence so that everyone is fully aware of who is participating.
3. It is necessary to let staff know of your location and provide an emergency contact, and that in the event of an emergency, emergency services may be called to your location.
4. There could be interruptions in meetings due to technology or connection failures, and we will create a plan in advance for what to do if this happens.
5. Everything outlined in the service agreement that applies to in-person meetings also applies to phone and video meetings. Phone and video meetings will be summarized and entered into your file as part of your record, in the same way as in-person meetings.
6. Phone and video meetings are not always the best way to communicate, and staff may decide that they are no longer appropriate. Face-to-face meetings with staff or other alternatives may be suggested if phone or video meetings are no longer suitable.
7. You are requested to use a private internet connection rather than public/free wifi, as this increases confidentiality and security.
8. You are responsible for paying for your own internet costs.
9. You are to use passwords on all your devices as this controls who has access and improves confidentiality and security.
10. No phone or online video software is entirely secure. Starling Community Services computer systems have strong internal security, which helps protect your privacy and confidentiality. Starling Community Services will not be responsible for breaches of your confidential information if they are not the direct result of intentional misconduct of Starling Community Services.



## Rights and Responsibilities

### Your Rights

While receiving services from Starling Community Services, every youth and family has given rights. Where relevant to your program and the service you are receiving, your participation is protected by legislation including the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, and the Youth Criminal Justice Act and guarantee you:

- Right to legal counsel
- Right to be informed
- Right to be heard
- Right to voice concerns or complaints
- Right to know of the Office of the Ontario Ombudsman and how the Ombudsman can be contacted
- Right to know your responsibilities in the program
- Right to know about rules and disciplinary practices
- Right to access food
- Right to appropriate clothing
- Right to participate in recreational activities
- Right to receive and participate in an appropriate education, training or work program
- Right to receive medical and dental care
- Right to privacy of mail
- Right to receive instruction and participate in activities related to creed, community identity and cultural identity, subject to certain restrictions
- Right to privacy
- Right to personal property
- Right to visits with family
- Rights of communication
- Right to a plan of care/reintegration plan
- Right to be free from corporal punishment

All youth receiving services under the CYFSA also have the following rights:

- To express their own views freely and safely about matters that affect them,
- To be engaged through an honest and respectful dialogue about how and why decisions affecting them are made and to have their views given due weight, in accordance with their age and maturity,
- To be consulted on the nature of the services provided or to be provided to them, and to be advised of the decisions made in respect of those services,

- To raise concerns or recommend changes with respect to the services provided or to be provided to them without interference or fear of coercion, discrimination, or reprisal and to receive a response to their concerns or recommended changes,
- To be informed in the language suitable to their understanding, of their rights under Part II of the Act.

Your rights regarding participation in Starling Community Services' program or service will be reviewed with

you, and/or your parent(s)/guardian(s) during the intake process. These rights include:

1. Recognizing that the treatment service is voluntary and giving your consent to the service. Consent means that you clearly understand all aspects of the service.
2. You have the right to participate in designing your Treatment Plan including setting goals, strategies and time limits.
3. You have the right to be informed of any information, decisions and actions that will affect you.
4. You have the right to participate in all decision making relevant to you.
5. You have the right to review and, if necessary, correct Agency information in your file/record.

### **Your Responsibilities**

The following is a list of responsibilities that will help you get the most out of your experience while participating in our programs and services:

- Let us know your needs in the most accurate and complete way possible so we can provide the most appropriate service options.
- Be respectful of other clients, volunteers, students, staff and property.
- Contact us when you're unable to keep appointments or to notify us of any change of address or other information relevant to treatment.
- Inform us of health and safety concerns and any accommodation required.
- Provide feedback on services and programs.
- Understand and follow the terms of the Service Agreement.

### **Risks and Benefits of Participation**

As is the case with any mental health program or service, there are benefits and possible risks that you may experience while participating in one of our programs.

#### **Risks**

In the course of making changes, difficult topics may need to be addressed and there may be distressing emotions and reactions that come along with that. You may experience an increase in negative behaviours during this time including resistance, self-harm and uncooperative or

disruptive behaviours. Every effort will be made to support you during difficult and challenging periods.

Inherent to the nature of our group treatment program (as is applicable to specific program modules) is a level of risk related to peer relationships and interactions. While we understand that peer relationships are likely to form, we hope to support this occurring in a healthy, productive way and ask your support in engaging, where necessary, to ensure peer relationships do not negatively impact your own or other children/youth's treatment. You may be asked to consult or support if peer dynamics become problematic and, in incidents where safety is a concern, we will engage those involved in a plan to ensure safety is maintained and treatment is not negatively impacted. This may require adjustments in scheduling or placement to avoid contact between the children/youth involved and, in the most severe circumstances could result in discharge from program.

### **Benefits**

Program interventions and participation in services will offer you a unique opportunity to observe and practice new skills, learn about social norms and improve on relationships at home, in the community and with your peers. While participating in this program or service you may discover new ways of relating to yourself and/or your family that may help resolve the challenges that brought you to Starling Community Services.

### **Client Complaints Process**

At times, you may feel upset or unhappy about what happens while you're involved with Starling Community Services' programs and services. Exploring your thoughts and feelings, even when they are negative is important. If, however, you have major concerns and feel that they are not being addressed, you have access to the Client Complaint Procedures outlined below.

Where there is a concern about the service you are receiving, Starling Community Services needs to know and is committed to resolving all complaints.

There will not be any negative consequences as a result of making a complaint in good faith. Starling Community Services is committed to ensuring that the complaint procedure is carried out in a timely fashion while recognizing some time may be needed to bring the necessary people together.

Starling Community Services will support you to choose a staff member who will assist you with the client complaint process. The staff member is responsible for ensuring your concerns are clearly and accurately communicated in writing, and that you are able to access external support at any time throughout the process.

**STEP ONE:** The first step to resolve complaints is for you to talk with your designated staff.

**STEP TWO:** If you are dissatisfied with the response and feel your concerns have not been satisfactorily resolved, we will support you in contacting a Program Supervisor, Manager or Assistant Director or Director in that order. Staff will facilitate contact between you and one of the above individuals in a way that best supports you and the circumstances involved.

**STEP THREE:** Ongoing unresolved issues may be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer, or his/her designate either by phone or in writing. Staff will assist you in making contact or by providing you with contact information. The CEO will review the issue, seek perspectives from those involved to help resolve the complaint in a timely and equitable manner.

Each step will be acknowledged within 3-5 business days and resolved within 14 business days from point it was acknowledged. If meeting defined timelines is not possible, you will be notified verbally or in writing that it will take longer and the reason for the delay.

If your concerns cannot be addressed at Starling Community Services, you may write to and/or call the Office of the Child and Family Services Advocacy. You can also, at any time, submit your concerns in writing to the Ombudsman, Member of Parliament or the Prime Minister. Starling Community Services staff cannot read this correspondence.

## **Community Advisory Committee**

Starling's Community Advisory Committee is a small, informal group that offers constructive feedback to Starling Community Services on ways to enhance the quality of its mental health services. We value the unique perspectives of the parents of our youth or adult past participants of one of our programs or services. For more information or to get involved, contact our Director of Mental Health Services at [hfedy@lutherwood.ca](mailto:hfedy@lutherwood.ca)

## **Live-in and Day Treatment Client Programs**

### **What to Expect from the Live-in or Day Treatment Programs**

While you are participating in a Live-in or Day Treatment Program at Starling Community Services, our treatment team will work with you to identify areas of strength and needs and to create a treatment plan. The treatment plan will include goals that you will work toward achieving and will outline the expected time needed to achieve them.

Regular meetings will be set to review progress, update goals (if needed) and discuss discharge and transition plans. It will be important for you (and your family/guardian) to attend and participate in your scheduled appointments.

Below are different parts of the treatment program and some of the services you might be involved in while in a Live-in or Day Treatment Program at Starling Community Services:

**Needs Assessments** are conducted by a clinical staff member and are a way for you and your family to express your wishes about treatment at Starling Community Services. The recommendations based on the needs assessment will be shared with you.

**Educational Programming** is provided on-site by teaching staff from the Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board.

**Skills Groups** are offered regularly to help you build skills to cope with strong emotions, work on social skills, and develop healthy habits. During group activities, you will learn new skills and then practice them in-the-moment, when situations arise, with the support of staff. Groups are also offered to parents and guardians to grow and develop skills to best support you.

**Individual Therapy and Counselling** involves planned sessions between you and a clinical staff member to provide support and strategies on a one-to-one basis to help you work toward your treatment goals.

**Family Therapy** involves the members of your family and centers around skill building and providing support in the areas of family interaction, roles of family members, coping with and managing strong emotions in the family, and parenting support.

### **Specialized Therapies**

The therapeutic supports outlined below may be a part of your treatment plan based on the outcome and recommendations of your needs assessment and the goals that you are working toward.

**Music therapy** is a goal-directed process in which you can engage in musical experiences with the music therapist in order to address an area of physical, emotional, cognitive, social, or spiritual need. Sessions include musical interventions such as song writing, clinical improvisation, singing and instrument playing, music listening, and creating art to music.

**Recreation Programming** uses leisure education programs, and recreation to enhance your physical and mental health, functional abilities, independence, and quality of life.

**Community Involvement** is often included, using community resources on a group and individual basis as part of our program. Where possible, we will also try to maintain any involvement in existing community activities (e.g., sports teams, clubs).

**Psychiatric Support** includes psychiatric assessment and monitoring of a medical plan which are provided by a consulting Psychiatrist and the Registered Nurse on-site. Your parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will be consulted to provide consent for any assessments and medical interventions.

**Psychology Support** may include consultation to you, your treatment team, and/or family to assist with better understanding mental health needs, diagnoses, learning needs and strengths, and determining interventions that will best support you and your success. Although not

typical, occasionally, under certain circumstances, there may be the opportunity for you to meet directly with psychology staff for treatment or assessment to help in identifying and reaching your treatment goals; in this situation, a separate consent process would be involved.

**Specialized Accommodations:** We recognize the individual and unique needs of those participating in our programs. We are able to accommodate spiritual/religious, ethno-cultural, medical, and dietary needs as identified at any point of your service with Starling Community Services. In certain cases, we will seek outside resources if we are unable to provide the type of accommodation required internally.

## **Building Security**

### **Security and Emergency Systems**

To ensure the safety and security of clients, staff and other visitors at the Benjamin Road site, an emergency response plan is in place to respond to emergency situations including Evacuation, Severe Weather and Tornados, Bomb Threat, Hostage Situation, Major Disturbance, Utility Outage and Lockdown. These procedures are overseen by Starling Community Services Leadership and the Joint Health and Safety Committee and are in compliance with fire code and licensing requirements. Clients and staff are oriented to these procedures and drills are practiced based on emergency preparedness training.

### **Lockdown Drills**

As is the practice in all Waterloo Region schools, a lockdown is used to secure the Benjamin Road facility and protect all occupants from life-threatening-violence that requires everyone to find a safe place to hide out-of-sight. Lockdown drills help to keep staff and clients safe, just as drills are done for other emergencies such as fire and tornados. The goal of a lockdown drill is for participants to practice moving rapidly to the closest room where a door can be closed and locked regardless of the circumstances. Lockdown drills will be no longer than five minutes in duration to minimize disruption and the impact on participants. The needs of current children and youth will be identified ahead so that individual preparation and support can be planned for. Staff will be trained on the lockdown procedure during their initial orientation and annually as part of emergency preparedness training. Lockdown drills will be scheduled twice a year in the early Fall and Spring. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Program Manager.

### **Video Monitoring for Door Security**

The Benjamin Road building and grounds is equipped with video monitoring devices for the purpose of identifying who is at the door prior to allowing them access to the building. Please note that the video is not recorded and that surveillance cameras are not located inside the building. Signs are posted notifying clients and guests that video cameras are in effect.

## Orientation to Interventions

In each of our programs, we work with clients from a collaborative, respectful, relationship-based, and trauma informed approach to help youth meet their goals and experience success in their home, school, and community environments.

We aim to provide support to clients and families in managing difficult situations and work together to gain a better understanding of needs in order to increase coping skills and strategies.

At times, staff intervention may be required to support clients who are experiencing challenges and displaying behaviour that is unsafe to themselves or others. Below is a list of these interventions:

### 1. Verbal Interventions

- Redirection;
- Requesting the youth stop the behaviour;
- Gathering information about underlying needs and the meaning behind the behaviour by setting a time to talk immediately or at a later time;
- Assisting in problem solving a plan that will help the next time a similar situation arises;
- Providing verbal cues;
- Providing calming strategies;
- Cueing and coaching to utilize skills learned in treatment groups, sometimes by engaging in a strategy along with the youth;
- Requesting the youth take space and engage in an independent activity;
- Providing support and planning on how to rejoin the group when the issue is successfully resolved either independently or with staff support;
- Facilitating group discussions related to managing difficult situations.

### 2. Alternative Interventions

- Developing an individualized plan together;
- The youth relocating to a place of safety;
- Pausing programming or participation in an activity, if necessary, until problem solving can occur;
- Use of an alternate space (e.g., debrief room) away from the regular program to provide the opportunity for a safe space to engage in calming strategies and provide staff support;
- Pausing in-person treatment in instances resulting in significant aggression causing injury or significant safety concerns and when there is a significant disruption to group treatment.

### 3. Physical Intervention

- **Physical Proximity**

Staff may support a youth by placing a hand on their shoulder, arm, or wrist to gently redirect them.

- **Physical Restraint**

The use of physical restraint is limited to circumstances where it is determined that other, less intrusive interventions are not possible or would be ineffective in maintaining safety. Physical restraint is a last resort, facilitated by staff who have specific training to do so. These interventions can only be used under the following conditions:

- There is a clear and imminent risk that a client will be physically injured or will cause physical injury to others,
- A youth will escape a place of open or secure custody or detention,
- A youth in a Youth Justice Services program will cause significant property damage and there is imminent risk the damage will cause harm to themselves or others.

Following an incident of physical intervention, staff will debrief with the youth to gather their perspective, explore how they felt about the physical intervention, ensure they are aware of why a physical intervention was used and to discuss how staff can support the youth in future situations.

Follow-up: staff will write an Incident Report, the Supervisor will be notified, the report reviewed and significant adults and/or agencies are notified of the use of a physical restraint.



## Keeping Our Youth Healthy

The goal of the wellness program at Starling Community Services is to promote your well-being. Where relevant, the various health services offered contribute to this goal through prevention, education, restoration, support and the promotion and maintenance of health and well-being.

Some aspects of the wellness program include:

- Offering health care during your stay at Starling Community Services including health teaching.
- Ensuring that you are up to date with your immunizations.
- Ensuring all medical/dental regulations outlined by the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA) and the Youth Justice Services Act (where applicable) are met and adhered to.
- Facilitating the correct administration and monitoring of all medications.

Parent(s) and/or guardian(s) need to know:

A Starling Community Services Physical Examination form must be completed by a physician within 30 days prior to admission to a Live-in Program at Starling Community Services. This is a directive from the Child, Youth and Family Services Act and families are not required to pay. Should your health care provider have any questions about this they can contact the Health Office at Starling Community Services 519-884-1470, ext. 1171.

- Nursing care is available Monday to Friday and we consult with the youth's doctor or a local clinic as needed to support with medical needs.
- Upon admission to Starling Community Services you are asked to sign a medical consent for:
  1. emergency medical, surgical or dental procedures in the event you as a parent/guardian are unavailable;
  2. the nurse to administer immunizations where indicated;
  3. the administration of some over the counter medications available should your child require them (please contact the Health Office if your child requires additional medications that are not normally provided (e.g., nicotine patches).
- In the event that your child is taking prescribed psychotropic medications a specific consent is required. This consent is required with every medication change.
- You are asked to provide payment for all medication while your child is admitted. If this proves to be a challenge, please contact the Health Office.
- Any time that you have questions about your child's medication or other health concerns feel free to contact the Health Office at 519-884-1470, ext. 1171.

## Community Mental Health Services

### **What to Expect from Community Mental Health**

Our goal is to offer individualized, flexible and goal-focused services. Our programs offer a variety of direct treatment interventions and case management supports based on needs and goals. Our programs are accessed through professional referrals only and not self-referrals.

Once we receive a referral for service, you can expect:

- A telephone call from one of our program staff to set up an initial meeting and answer any questions you may have. They will also ask detailed questions about your history, life situation and present distress to assess the types and extent of concerns you have.
- Support from program staff or team assigned to working with you and your family.
- After we have identified the areas of need, together we will agree on a plan of action including specific goals and objectives, methods to accomplish these goals and the approximate length of time it will take to achieve the goals.
- Depending on the specific service that has been identified to meet your needs, a start date and end date will be discussed with you.
- An agreement, also known as a Service Agreement, will be reviewed and signed with you and is a service contract between you and Starling Community Services
- Periodically, we will meet to review progress. Sometimes the review will lead us to change the goals and/or adjust the discharge date we have agreed on.
- At the end of your contract, we will evaluate the success of the work by referring back to the goals you set at the beginning.

To make the service work, it is important for you and your family to participate in all of your scheduled appointments.

We encourage you to be as active, open and honest as possible as it will help us understand how best to support you. Finally, the most important responsibility is to work toward the goals we have mutually agreed upon.

## Psychology Services

### **What to Expect from Psychology Services**

#### **Psychological Therapy or Counselling:**

- People participate in therapy or counselling when they are having problems in some area of their lives, or have been through some difficult experiences, and want to make things better.
- A “Service Agreement” will be reviewed and signed with you at your first meeting. The Service Agreement is a contract between you and Starling Community Services (See page 8 for more information).
- You can expect to meet with your therapist for about an hour at each appointment, and you may have appointments every week, or less often.
- In the first few meetings, your therapist will ask questions about your life situation, history, concerns, and strengths. Together you will decide on treatment goals and a plan of action.
- The length of time you will continue to attend meetings will depend on your personal situation and goals. As you continue to meet, you will have the chance to check in on how things are progressing. Goals and action plans can be adjusted as needed.
- Potential risks to attending psychological therapy may include experiencing some discomfort in talking about difficult topics, or feeling upset during or after sessions. Your therapist will do their best to support you in this process. Change can be difficult, and you may not agree with all of the suggestions or observations made by your therapist. You always have the right to ask questions, disagree, and express your opinion.
- Alternatives to attending psychological therapy include seeking out other types of supports such as group therapy, other counselling agencies or community programs, or a psychiatrist.
- Potential benefits to attending psychological therapy include the opportunity to resolve problems, feel better, learn ways to get along with others, reach personal goals, and receive individualized support.

#### **Psychological Assessment:**

- People participate in psychological assessments to learn more about themselves, to help others in their lives understand them, and to identify things that will help them feel better and be successful in their goals. Your assessor will tailor the assessment to your unique questions and needs.
- You will meet with your assessor a number of times, usually from one to three hours at a time. Meetings will include the assessor asking questions to get to know you, your history, and your concerns. You will be asked to take part in activities that allow us to

assess areas such as your thinking, learning, and emotions, and you may be asked to complete some questionnaires.

- With permission from you and/or your guardian, your assessor will talk to others who know you, such as your parent or foster parent, workers, teachers, or others, and may ask them to complete some questionnaires. They may read information about you such as past assessment reports and report cards. This information helps the assessor get to know you better so that they can be more helpful to you.
- After collecting all the needed information, there will be another meeting where the assessor will talk with you about the “results” of the assessment (what we found out from it), and about suggestions that may be helpful for you. With appropriate consent, others such as workers, parents or foster parents, or school staff may attend this or a separate meeting to also learn about how to best support you.
- There will be a written report containing all of the findings from the assessment. The assessment information and report will be kept securely stored in Starling Community Services’ files for at least 10 years past your 18th birthday, and you or your guardian will receive a copy of the report. Copies can also be shared with others (e.g., your doctor or teachers) with appropriate consent if it would be useful for you.
- Potential risks associated with participating in a psychological assessment include finding some of the things discussed uncomfortable or upsetting, finding some assessment tasks uninteresting or difficult, or finding some parts of the assessment results confusing or difficult to hear. You always have the right to choose not to complete activities, to ask questions, disagree, and express your opinion.
- Alternatives to participating in a psychological assessment could include seeking assessment from another professional such as a psychiatrist, or services from another mental health professional.
- Potential benefits of participating in a psychological assessment include gaining a better understanding of your own strengths and challenges, helping others to understand you better, and receiving suggestions for ways to address challenges and meet your goals. Many of the assessment tasks are quite interesting, and many people enjoy the opportunity to discuss their lives and experiences.

### **Court-Ordered Psychological Assessments:**

- Some youth have been referred for a psychological assessment under Section 34 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. If this is the case, some aspects of the assessment are different from when the assessment happens through other avenues.
- In these cases, the judge is asking for information about whether any psychological, learning, or emotional difficulties have contributed to the commission of the offences before the court, and if so, for recommendations that will help prevent such behaviour in the future.

- For a court-ordered assessment, the completed Psychological Assessment Report containing information, results, and recommendations is sent to the court, and is distributed to the judge, the young person’s lawyer, and to the prosecuting attorney. The young person and his/her guardian can request a copy of the report. Consent is not required for the report to be sent to the court.
- While the psychologist will make recommendations about sentencing, the judge always makes the final decision, and is not obligated to use the recommendations in the assessment report.
- Although a youth can refuse to participate in a court ordered assessment, the consequences could be quite serious, and the refusal to participate may have a negative impact when sentencing decisions are made by the judge.
- As with psychological assessments occurring through other routes, a court ordered assessment remains an opportunity for a person to learn about themselves, find solutions to problems, and help their caregivers to understand and support them better.

## **Complaints to College of Psychologists**

Starling Community Services Psychologists are certified for independent practice by the College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO) or are supervised by a certified College member. If you are dissatisfied with the professional service offered to you by a Starling Community Services psychologist, you have the right to make a complaint to the College of Psychologists.

Information about making a complaint is readily available on the CPO website: [www.cpo.on.ca](http://www.cpo.on.ca), > Members of the public > Complaints about members > Complaints process.

You may contact the College by mail, phone, or email using the information below:

The College of Psychologists of Ontario  
110 Eglinton Avenue West Suite 5000  
Toronto, ON M4R 1A3  
1-416-961-8817 or toll free at 1-800-489-8388  
[cpo@cpo.on.ca](mailto:cpo@cpo.on.ca)