

FEATURE STORY:



Y's Kids, YWCA Regina

Tara Molson, Sr. Director of Community Programs

The experience of living in a home with disharmony, violence or abuse impacts a child's development and at times dictates their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. The [Y's Kids program](#) provides children with an opportunity to counteract the adverse effects that trauma has on development through strengthening families, removing stigma, teaching coping skills, and creating connections.

The Y's Kids program improves developmental outcomes for children who have been impacted by violence, providing a safe and supportive place to engage in fun, learning, sport, recreation, connection, and mentorship. Our program works to ensure that children and youth who take part can receive support that is flexible, trauma-informed, and barrier-free to create positive outcomes that align with their specific and personal goals. It helps children identify and learn how to interpret and express their feelings honestly and directly, helping build the foundation of non-violent problem solving. These skills directly relate to decreasing the cycles of violence.

Y's Kids was developed out of an expressed community need to fill a recognized service gap in the community around programming for children and youth who have experienced or witnessed violence. Y's Kids is the only program in Regina that offers a support-group setting for children who have been exposed to violence in various forms.

Our focus is not just on children and youth but on families. Our moms/caregivers group provides space for women who have experienced violence to be supported as they support their children who have also been exposed to trauma. The caregiver's group runs simultaneously to the children's group and provides insight on how violence impacts a family, provides women the opportunity to connect with other survivors in their community, and provides them with supplementary tools to help their families.

The Y's Kids program provides children and their caregivers with a safe place to express their thoughts and emotions and connect with others. It helps participants feel respect for themselves, confidence in their ability to develop healthy relationships, the tools and knowledge to become equipped with new coping skills, and the understanding that violence isn't their fault.

"It was fun, I really liked the anger volcano and making the worry doll because they helped me understand my feelings. I learned that abuse is not my fault. I made friends with people who have been through scary things like me so it made me feel better. I really like group and have lots of fun when I am here. I get a big smile all over my face when I get to go to group!" – Program Participant

How has your program been modified since the onset of COVID-19? Were there any obstacles you had to overcome? Any tips or lessons learned?

There have been many changes to the Y's Kids program as we navigate the current pandemic.

The program ended early in the spring of 2020 and continued via telephone and one-on-one services as needed. We know that electronics and internet services are a privilege that not everyone is afforded which made transferring the program online difficult.

Knowing the needs of our community and the critical circumstances that the pandemic has created through increased calls and community referrals, our program is set to begin in person in October.

We have ensured socially distanced program space, Personal Protective Equipment for participants and facilitators, as well as smaller group sizes.

