



## Meeting Summary CASA Youth Council May 18th, 2017

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**This meeting focused on a variety of different topics and projects.** The main points of discussion from the meeting have been detailed below.

**Welcome to new members.** At this meeting we welcomed four new Youth Council members. The group took a few minutes to introduce themselves and the Facilitators outlined the Council's main goals and purpose as a mental health action group.

**One year of CYC.** CASA Youth Council has officially been around for a whole year! Members and facilitators took time to reflect on the past year of youth council. Facilitators asked CYC members what they feel has been our biggest accomplishment so far. Several of the members, as well as the facilitators, stated how much they valued the forum for personal growth that youth council has provided. Other noteworthy accomplishments included the creation, development, and publication of *Unseen*, and the expansion of the council from four members to sixteen members.

**Group discussion about barriers to mental wellness in schools.** The council members had an energetic discussion about the challenges that students living with mental health challenges face in in school. Council members shared personal experiences about some challenges they have faced and discussed areas that they feel need improvement including:

- Reducing stigma around student mental health challenges
- Increasing school staff understanding about the accommodations that students experiencing a mental illness may need
- Supporting students to feel safe to speak about their challenges at school
- Advocating for additional school counselor resources in school

Other areas where CYC members are interested in making changes include the justice system and the Alberta health system.

**Letter from the Minister of Children's Services.** CASA's Board Chair, Faye Parker, recently shared a copy of *Unseen* with the Minister of Children's Services, Danielle Larivee. Minister Larivee wrote a letter in response to the magazine, stating her appreciation for *Unseen* and the work of the council, and that she will be sharing the magazine with her colleagues.

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**Update on meeting with Councillor Scott McKeen.** Chelsea, Jillian, Denise (CASA CEO), and Faye (CASA Board Chair) had the opportunity to meet with Edmonton City Councillor Scott McKeen last Friday. The purpose of the meeting was to connect with Councillor McKeen about CYC, and had originally been arranged by Jen. Councillor McKeen expressed a keen interest in supporting the youth council. It was proposed that perhaps Councillor McKeen may be interested in doing a workshop session with the youth council. This idea was brought forward to the council members, with council members expressing great interest in arranging a workshop with the Councillor. Facilitators will reach out to Councillor McKeen to make initial plans for the workshop.

**Update on presentation at Austin O'Brien High School.** Anna, Victoria, and Ashlee (CASA Foundation) presented to students at Austin O'Brien High School on April 26th. The students at the school were planning a bikeathon, and had chosen to donate money raised to CASA. Anna and Victoria had the chance to share information about CASA and the CYC with the students.

**PTSD Service Dogs.** Thomas shared his ideas regarding advocating for the legalization of PTSD service dogs for children and youth in Alberta. Thomas informed the council that currently in Alberta, an individual can receive a government-funded service dog for concerns like blindness or deafness. However, if an individual wants a PTSD dog, they have to pay between out of pocket for the dog and its training expenses. The council discussed ways in which the CYC could support this project. Ideas shared included:

- Arranging a meeting with the appropriate CASA staff
- Writing an article for issue two of *Unseen*
- Create an animal therapy room at CASA

**Update on CASA Carnival.** CASA held its big annual fundraiser, CASA Carnival, last Friday. Four CYC members had the opportunity to attend the gala. The event featured a live auction, with CYC being included as an auction item at the event. Gala attendees were bidding for the chance to pay for the next issues of *Unseen* and the costs of youth council. Jen and Victoria introduced the auction item by delivering a short speech about CYC. The event managed to raise \$25,000 for the council.

**School presentations.** Council members have long expressed interest in doing school presentations. CYC members are very passionate about reducing stigma and increasing awareness of mental health in schools. There is a clear need for a greater understanding of mental health and mental illness in the school system. The council would like to work towards developing presentations that target both students of all ages (elementary through high school) and teachers. The aim is to officially begin doing school presentations in the 2017-2018 school year. To support this goal, facilitators have organized a mini-workshop on public speaking for May 30th from 5:00pm to 8:00pm.

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**Workshops and training sessions.** There are several upcoming workshops and training sessions. Members interested in attending the workshops are invited to bring a laptop (if they have one), as there are limited computers available. The upcoming sessions are:

- May 23rd: Unseen Issue Two Workshop (10AM-4PM, CASA Centre)
- May 30th: Public Speaking Workshop (5PM-8PM, CASA Centre)
- June 17th-18th: Mental Health First Aid (time TBD, CASA Centre)
  - *Please note that the Mental Health First Aid training is **not** a drop-in session, and requires pre-registration with the facilitators.*

