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Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre

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Program description

Amethyst works with women, individually and in groups, who are concerned about their substance use and/or problem gambling. We provide structured community based day treatment and educational services which promote healthy lifestyles. Treatment programs are structured and include individual and group therapy. Through education and social action, we help prevent women and children at high risk from developing an addiction. At a community level, we provide training and consultation to improve understanding of women's addiction issues.

The Problem Gambling Program works with women to develop their goals of reducing or stopping gambling. Services are free and are available in both French and English.

Here is an outline of the Problem Gambling Program:

Intake: To see a counselor for an assessment, clients must call Amethyst and complete a brief intake interview over the phone. An appointment for the client will usually be made for one week later.

Assessment: During the first meeting, the counselor will assess the client's gambling problem and decide if Amethyst is the right place for the client to seek treatment.

Individual counseling: Provision of counseling using a variety of therapeutic approaches including: cognitive behavioral, feminist, empowerment, humanistic counseling.

Group support: Therapeutic groups are facilitated by a problem gambling counselor.

Twelve-week treatment program (available in English only): The program consists of 12 psycho-educational groups and is held two hours per week for 12 weeks. The following topics are covered in the group discussions:

- Problem gambling
- Women and gambling
- Finances and the emotional meaning of money
- Assertiveness
- Stress
- Body image and self-esteem
- Relationships
- Relapse prevention
- Women and violence
- Anger
- Women and depression
- Priorities and goals

Two-year follow-up support: Individual counselling and support groups are available for up to two years after cessation of treatment.

Other services available to Amethyst clients (available in English only):

- Sexual Abuse Program: A 12-week support group for Amethyst clients

confronting painful memories of childhood sexual abuse.

- Childcare: Available two half days per week for women attending appointments.
- Children's programming: Children who have parents in either the gambling program or the substance abuse program can participate. There are two programs available for children at Amethyst: a play-therapy group for four- to seven-year-olds and a drug abuse prevention program group for eight- to 12-year-olds.
- Parenting course for women in recovery
- Other services: Amethyst often offers courses on a variety of topics, such as dealing with anger, stress or building self-esteem. Other courses include Art Therapy and Structured Relapse Prevention.

Philosophy of service

Amethyst is grounded in the feminist belief that women's experience with problem gambling, alcohol or other drugs cannot be separated from our experiences and status as women. We address the direct links between gambling and/or substance use with the unequal position of women in society and the many forms of violence against women. A central task for Amethyst is to help women take charge of their lives by changing or ending their gambling habits and by making changes that enhance their strengths, their freedom and their choices. We help link women to other services that are available in the community for issues such as abuse, mental health and housing.

Staff background

Amethyst staff come from a variety of different educational backgrounds, including social work, psychology and counselling.

Description of our clients

Amethyst is mandated to work with women 18 and over. Couple counselling is available as requested and services for children are available. Our primary clients are adult women. The majority of the women we work with have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse.

Program evaluation and research involvement

Amethyst has been involved in several research initiatives since the inception of our Problem Gambling Program in 2000. We were a part of the advisory board for a research project on women and gambling with the University of Toronto.

Students working toward their master of social work degree at Carleton University conducted research that evaluated problem gambling treatment services for women; this evaluation tool has been administered to Amethyst service users. We look forward to contributing to and benefiting from further research on gender specific issues with problem gambling.

Article Categories:

- Service profile