



Ebony Rempel, Executive Director

Odyssey House

Theme: Wrap-around Supportive Responses for Women

Odyssey House is an emergency shelter providing safe, secure, and supportive accommodation for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence, are in crisis, or in need of a housing alternative. In January 2016, Serenity Place, a new 14-unit apartment building was opened and provides accommodation for anywhere from six to twenty-four months, depending on their unique circumstances.

Critical Elements

- In order to better serve women and children, Odyssey House developed a new management structure where managers are responsible across both the emergency and the second stage shelters.. These positions have moved Odyssey House from working in silos to becoming more integrated and therefore providing more streamlined services to women and children.
- Odyssey House went through a grass root process to work towards becoming trauma informed. Odyssey House worked with an outside consultant to assist with this process that involved all staff.
- Volunteers from the staff formed a committee to look at what a trauma informed practice would look like for Odyssey House. This committee participated in a “post it note” exercise. They were asked to put words on post it notes that exemplified what trauma informed practice would look like for Odyssey House. A “word cloud” was created and the “words” were organized into groups or clusters of words that were similar. The word cloud was taken to a larger staff meeting for input from the other staff.
- Odyssey House has now formed 11 teams (all staff are involved and each staff choose which team they wanted to be on) to examine each of their practices to see if they align with how Odyssey House views trauma informed practice. Odyssey House is now in the process of putting these identified practices into reality. Each team has a chair and is responsible for searching out as much information as possible regarding specific practices.
- When working on creating a trauma informed practice it is essential to involve all staff in the process. Staff need to be a part of the process, they need to be asked for their input, they need to be listened to and communication needs to be clear and it is important to check in with staff to ensure they do understand what is being shared. The work should not be behind closed doors. It is important that staff know “why” changes are important not just what the changes are; staff buy in is essential.
- Women residing at Odyssey House were also asked for their input regarding changes to practices at Odyssey House.