



Outreach Therapy

Family Handbook

Port Alberni Association for Children with Developmental Disabilities

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At Outreach Therapy, every child's abilities are valued, every family's voice is heard and every step taken together is a reason to celebrate!

INTRODUCTION:

Outreach Therapy is a registered non-profit organization that has been providing services in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District since 1981! Our legal name is the Port Alberni Association for Children with Developmental Disabilities. Our services are child and family centered meaning that the child and their caregivers are at the center of all the decisions we make and involved in every step of our service delivery.

Our Vision: Children and Families are connected to supports to thrive in our communities

Our Mission: We provide integrated specialist services to help children live their best lives

Our Values:

- **Belonging:** We are welcoming, we create connections and relationships, we foster a positive and inclusive culture and we create safe spaces for children and families.
- **Enthusiastic Care:** We are optimistic and enthusiastic about possibilities for kids, we make a difference in kids' lives, we uphold high standards of care and we love what we do!
- **Growth:** We focus on abilities, we support our team members to grow, we grow as an organization, and we value everyone's contributions.

Communities Served: Referrals can be for children who live within the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District.

- This includes the following First Nations communities:

- Hupačasath First Nation (Alberni Valley)
- c̓išaaʔath (Tseshaht) First Nation (Alberni Valley)
- Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation (Tofino, Opitsaht, Esowista, Tyhistanis)
- Yuułuʔilʔath (Ucluelet) First Nation (Hitacu)
- ɬukʷaaʔath (Toquaht) First Nation (Macoah)
- Hesquiaht First Nation (Hot Springs Cove)
- ɬaaḥ uusʔath (Ahousaht) First Nation
- Huu-ay-aht First Nation (Anacla)
- Ditidaht First Nations (Nitinaht Lake)



Address and Contact Information:

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Website: www.outreachtherapy.org

Facebook: Outreach Therapy, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District

Instagram: Instagram.com/outreachtherapy-

Centre Hours:

The centre is open Monday to Friday 8:30am-4:30pm. Individual therapist's work hours may vary to accommodate for flexible scheduling of appointments for our families.

PROGRAMS:

All of our programs are free of charge and funding for these services comes from the Ministry of Children and Family Development. Anyone can refer to our services as long as the parent/legal guardian have consented to the referral.

1. **Early Intervention Program:** These services are for children from birth to school entry.
 - a. Occupational Therapy
 - b. Physiotherapy
 - c. Speech and Language Pathology (currently only in West Coast communities)
2. **Early Childhood Mental Health Program:** These services are for children from birth to 6 years of age.
 - a. Clinical Counselling

Occupational Therapy:

- Occupational Therapists are specialized clinicians. They can support children and families when there is an identified concern in any of the following areas:
 - o Self-care skills (bathing, grooming (teeth, nails, hair), toileting, feeding)
 - o Sensory Processing
 - o Play skills
 - o Emotional regulation
 - o Fine motor concerns
 - o Positioning and seating concerns

Physiotherapy:

- Physiotherapists are specialized clinicians. They can support when a child has, is suspected of having, or is at risk for a developmental delay and/or disability in musculoskeletal, neuromuscular, cardiovascular, respiratory functioning and postural control. This includes those with existing disabilities, health conditions (including traumatic injury), and birth factors that could lead to the development of a delay or disabling condition. Examples include:
 - o Conditions like cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, or Down Syndrome
 - o Orthopedic conditions such as club foot or hip dysplasia
 - o Torticollis, plagiocephaly or brachycephaly
 - o Motor coordination deficits
 - o Low or high muscle tone
 - o Postural concerns
 - o Delayed gross motor milestones (e.g. sitting, crawling, walking) and/or atypical movement patterns

Speech and Language Pathology:

- A Speech and Language Pathologist screens, monitors and assesses communication abilities. Identifies communication goals based on the child's abilities and parent's concerns. They provide parents with information and strategies to support their child's communication skills
- Parents who have concerns about their child's communication skills can self-refer.
- They can support when there is an identified support need in any of the following areas of development:
 - o Understanding words and phrases
 - o Imitating or pronouncing speech sounds
 - o Communicating needs and expressing ideas
 - o Social interactions
 - o Hearing impairment
 - o Cleft lip or palate
 - o Stuttering
 - o Developmental delays
 - o Autism
 - o Problems with pitch, volume or quality of speech
 - o Weak oral muscles and/or problems swallowing

Clinical Counselling:

- Our therapists are Registered Clinical Counsellors with specializations in play therapy. This service is for children with an identified concern in any of the following

areas that is impacting the child's development and ability to participate in daily activities:

- attachment challenges
- trauma
- anxiety
- complex grief and loss
- challenging behaviors
- regulation/co regulation
- self harm

- These concerns should be out of the range of typical development

OUR SERVICES PROCESS:

Referrals:

Referrals are accepted from any source! It is required that the legal guardian consents to a referral being made. Sources of referrals include parents, caregivers and professionals in the community. Referral forms are available on our website or by calling the centre and having one emailed to you. All doctors, daycares, preschools, public health facilities have our referral forms available as well.

Early Intervention Program: The referral is made to our Early Intervention Team which is made up of service providers from 4 organizations. Island Health (Preschool Speech Services), PAACL (Supported Child Development, IDP, Keyworker Program), Nuu Chah Nulth Tribal Council (Early Years Outreach Program) and Outreach Therapy (Early Intervention Program OT, PT, SLP West Coast). Referrals are processed at a monthly meeting to ensure families are connected to the best service to support their goals for their child.

Early Childhood Mental Health program: Referrals can be sent in from any source and are screened to ensure the needs are a match for the service by one of our clinical counsellors. If this program is not the best fit for the family's goals, this will be discussed with the family and they will be connected to a different service.

What if my child is not eligible for services?

If your child is not eligible for our services (ex. They have aged out of our programs or the needs are within typical development) you will be contacted to discuss this and ensure you are connected to the supports you need. You will be provided with the reason why your child is not eligible for our services and you will be provided with information about other

services you may be able to access. We will ensure you have the support you need to connect to a more appropriate service.

If you believe that your child is eligible for our services and would like us to reconsider, please ask to speak to our executive director.

If we are unable to address your concerns, you may make a formal complaint. Information on our complaint process is provided in this handbook and it available on our website. If you need assistance in making a complaint, please ask any of our staff for assistance.

Caseload and Waitlist:

We do our absolute best to connect with families in a timely manner. You will hear from us within 3 months of referral to discuss your concerns, ensure you are connected with supports and to inform you of wait times for active service. If you are struggling and waiting to connect with a service provider is not an option, please contact our office and you will be connected with one of our amazing staff for support. At times we offer different groups, workshops and other supports while you are waiting for services. These are often shared on our social media and website.

Intake and Assessment:

When a clinician takes you on as active on their caseload you can expect to start the intake process. This is frequently completed by the clinician you will be working with, however, we have a team of therapy assistants who sometimes help with our intake questions. During your initial appointment with one of our clinicians further information will be gathered from you. You will be provided with more information about the service, there will be a discussion about consent and confidentiality and then the assessment process will begin. Depending on what service you are accessing, you may have your first appointment with or without your child. This depends on clinician preference, parent preference and the nature of the referral. It is important to us that we include your child in our services, however we understand that some conversations need to happen without little ones present.

While the assessment process may vary across services, it generally involves getting to know the child and their caregivers and identifying the child's strengths and challenges, as well as the family's goals and priorities for services. Formal assessments may be part of this process, however this will depend on the nature of the concerns and what service you are accessing.

Once the assessment process is complete, results/observations will be discussed with you. You will have the opportunity to provide comments and further input. If any formal assessments are completed or assessment reports are written at this time, they will be share with you and you can ask to have them be shared with any other team members.

Service Planning:

Following the completion of any assessments and/or observations, we will work with you and your child to develop a service plan. These are referred to as Individual Service Plans (ISP). These plans will highlight goals and priorities for service and what recommendations, therapy, activities will help to work towards these goals. If you are working with more than one program or service our clinicians will work together with you and your team to develop this plan.

Meetings/Multidisciplinary Communication:

During the time that you are receiving services with us, there may be a reason to have a team meeting or a service planning meeting. Meetings will not take place without your knowledge, and you will be invited to be a part of any of these meetings.

In addition to formal meetings, we frequently have internal team meetings to discuss how we are supporting families and ensuring that we are doing everything we can to work towards the goals.

Discharge from Services:

Once your child has:

- Aged out of our programs
- Met their goals
- Found other supports
- Moved out of our catchment area

Your child would then be discharged from our services. We will partner with you to ensure that there is a plan for transitioning and if ongoing services are needed, we will work with you to get those in place for a smooth transition.

When services are complete the therapist(s) working with your child will document the services provided, changes in development and any recommendations for future services needed. Copies of any discharge reports, past reports or letters of support will be provided to you.

We also work closely with the school district when your child is nearing Kindergarten to ensure that the transition to school is supported. We will ask for your consent prior to discussing your child with the school district.

**There are two circumstances in which your child may be discharged from the services of the center outside of the reasons listed above.

- If we are unable to get in contact with you and/or the referral source.

- If there are 3 missed appointments without notice or reason provided. We do our best to support families to get to appointments and there are situations in which appointments will get missed. However, communication and notice about the missed appointments are important when rescheduling.

In both situations a letter is sent prior to the file being closed with a 2-week deadline for the family to contact us to discuss. Children can always be re-referred to our services but will be placed back on the waitlist.

Text Messaging, Email Communication, and Reports

Outreach Therapy offers families the option of communicating with us by text message and/or email. These methods may be used for:

- Appointment reminders or scheduling
- Checking in with you about your child's services
- Sharing information about activities, events, or resources

We hope this makes it easier for you to stay connected with our team.

Before giving your consent, please be aware:

- Text and email messages are sent over public networks and may not be secure.
- Service providers (e.g., your phone company or email provider) may keep copies of your messages.
- For your privacy, please do not include personal or identifying details about your child or family in text or email messages.

Reports by Email

Typically reports are shared in paper form through the mail. Reports are only shared with people/services with the written consent of the legal guardian. At the request of the parent/guardian, reports may be emailed. All reports will be password protected before being sent. Parent/guardian consent will always be obtained before any report is shared by email.

You may withdraw your consent at any time by notifying us.

RIGHTS of PERSONS SERVED

At Outreach Therapy, we uphold the rights and dignity of every individual accessing our services. These rights are guided by the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, the **BC Human Rights Code**, and other applicable laws and regulations.

These rights include:

1. Right to Respect and Dignity

- You have the right to be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of your background, beliefs, or circumstances.

2. Right to Informed Consent

- You have the right to receive clear and comprehensive information about our services and to provide informed consent before services are initiated.

3. Right to Privacy and Confidentiality

- Your personal information will be handled confidentially in compliance with legal standards.
- You have the right to access and request corrections to your records.

4. Right to Non-Discrimination

- Services will be provided free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or other protected characteristics.

5. Right to Safety

- You are entitled to a safe and secure environment.
- Concerns about safety will be addressed promptly.

6. Right to Participation

- You have the right to participate actively in planning and evaluating the services you receive.

7. Right to Access Services

- You have the right to timely and responsive services that meet your needs.

8. Right to Voice Concerns

- You can express complaints or concerns without fear of retaliation. These will be addressed fairly and promptly.

9. Right to Cultural Sensitivity

- Services will respect and respond to your cultural beliefs and practices.

10. Right to Refuse Services

- You may refuse services or treatments, with an understanding of the consequences. The only situation in which you may not refuse services is if there are court ordered or requirements from a social worker for attendance and completion requirements.

Complaints Procedure

If you have concerns about the services you receive, we encourage you to follow this procedure:

1. Step 1: Discuss with Staff

- Share your concern directly with the staff member involved, if comfortable. Most issues can be resolved at this level.

2. Step 2: Escalate to Management

- If unresolved, contact the Executive Director. You can submit your concern verbally or in writing. Complaints forms are available for you to complete or they will be completed when you discuss your complaint with the ED.

3. Step 3: Formal Complaint

- If you are not satisfied with the response, submit a formal written complaint to the Board of Directors. Include:
 - Your name and contact details.
 - A description of the concern.
 - Steps already taken to resolve the issue.
- Formal complaints will be acknowledged within 3 days and investigated within 10 business days.

4. Step 4: External Resolution

- If the issue remains unresolved, you may contact an external agency, such as the BC Ombudsperson or the Human Rights Tribunal, for assistance.

All complaints will be handled confidentially, and no individual will face retaliation for voicing concerns.

Client Responsibilities

Failure to meet the following responsibilities may result in termination of services. While we are committed to protecting your rights, we also ask that you fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. Respect for Others

- Treat staff, volunteers, and other participants with courtesy and respect.

2. Provide Accurate Information

- Share truthful and complete information about your circumstances to ensure effective service delivery.

3. Participation in Services

- Engage actively in the planning and implementation of your services.

4. Follow Agreed Plans

- Make every effort to follow the mutually agreed service or treatment plans.

5. Communication

- Notify the organization promptly if you are unable to attend scheduled appointments or need to change your plans.
- Inform us (through the complaint process) if you feel that any staff member has treated you unfairly, or if you have any concerns relating to our code of ethics or confidentiality.

6. Respect for Property

- Use organizational resources and property responsibly and respectfully.

7. Adherence to Policies

- Abide by the policies and procedures of Outreach Therapy, including health and safety guidelines.

HEALTH and SAFETY

Outreach Therapy is committed to providing children, families, staff, volunteers, and visitors with a safe and healthy environment. We follow Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) policies and procedures designed to ensure well-being for everyone who accesses our services. Our facilities and equipment are maintained to meet current safety standards and regulations, and staff receive ongoing training to support safe practices.

If you ever have questions about health and safety or notice a safety concern, we encourage you to speak with any staff member. Your feedback helps us maintain a safe environment for all.

Scent and Smoke-Free Environment

To create an inclusive and healthy space for children, families, and staff, Outreach Therapy provides a reduced scent and smoke-free environment. We ask that all visitors respect these conditions by avoiding scented products and refraining from smoking or vaping on our premises.

Emergency Preparedness

Outreach Therapy has policies and procedures in place to guide staff and families in the event of an accident, natural disaster, or other emergency. Our staff receive training in emergency preparedness and safety protocols so they can respond appropriately to protect children and families. In the event of an emergency while on site, please follow the directions of our staff.

If you would like more information about our emergency procedures, please do not hesitate to ask a member of our team.

SICK POLICY

At Outreach Therapy, the health and well-being of children, families, and staff is very important. To help prevent the spread of illness and to ensure your child is feeling their best during therapy, we ask families to keep children home when they are unwell.

Common symptoms that mean your child should stay home include:

- Fever (must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication before returning)
- Vomiting or diarrhea (must be symptom-free for at least 48 hours before returning)
- Persistent cough, difficulty breathing, or wheezing
- Undiagnosed rash or skin infection
- Red or draining eyes (possible conjunctivitis/pink eye)

- Severe sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- General signs of being unwell (unusual tiredness, irritability, loss of appetite)

Return to therapy guidelines:

- Children should be symptom-free for at least **24 hours** before returning to therapy (or **48 hours** in the case of vomiting/diarrhea).
- If your child is taking antibiotics, please wait at least **24 hours after starting medication** before attending and they must be symptom free.
- If your child has a contagious illness (such as strep throat, chickenpox, or influenza), please follow the advice of your healthcare provider regarding when it is safe to return.

Cancelling and rescheduling appointments:

We understand that illnesses can arise suddenly. If your child is sick and unable to attend therapy, please notify us as soon as possible so we can adjust schedules and, when possible, offer the appointment time to another family. Providing as much notice as possible helps us serve more families in our community.

Your child's comfort and safety—and the health of other children and staff—are our top priorities. Thank you for helping us keep Outreach Therapy a safe and healthy place for everyone.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS:

All of our staff have specialized training in their respective disciplines. There are post secondary requirements that are confirmed annually in order for many of our staff to maintain a license to practice in their specialty. Individual information about our clinicians and their qualifications can be found in our team section on our website. All staff are supported to participate in annual continuing education.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

At Outreach Therapy, all services you and your child receive are treated as confidential. This means that information about you and your child will not be shared with others unless we have your written permission through a *Consent to Obtain/Release Information Form*.

There are certain situations, however, where we are legally required to share information without your consent. These include:

- When we receive a court order or subpoena

- When we witness a criminal act, suspect or observe abuse, or have information that may be important to a child protection investigation
- When we believe that you, your child, or someone in the community may be at risk of harm

If one of these situations occurs, we will do our best to communicate with you in a respectful and open manner. If you would like more information about our duty to report child abuse or safety concerns, resources are available at Outreach Therapy, and our staff are happy to answer your questions.

SUMMARY

At Outreach Therapy, our goal is to work alongside you to support your child's growth, development, and well-being. We are committed to creating a safe, welcoming, and family-centered environment where children can thrive. This handbook is designed to give you an overview of our services, policies, and commitments to you and your family. If you ever have questions, concerns, or ideas, we encourage you to connect with us—we value your input and believe that families are our most important partners in care. Together, we can help your child reach their fullest potential.