



Eagle Nest Community and Aboriginal Services, Ltd.



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Mona Aldoff, Executive Director

- Eagle Sweet
- Eagle Sight
- Cougar House
- Bear Residence
- Panda Place
- Sus Mots Yah
- Thunderbird Lodge

E.N.C.A.A.S.

Background

Eagle Nest Community and Aboriginal Services, Ltd. (ENCAAS) provides residential care in group homes for children ranging in age from birth to 19 years old. The organization cares for the children 24 hours a day and provides them with educational opportunities, recreational activities, emotional and spiritual support, and medical attention. The organization has been accredited since 2004, and has achieved consecutive three-year CARF accreditations.

ENCAAS operates seven locations that are designed to suit the different situations in which the children may find themselves. Mona Aldoff, executive director of ENCAAS, says, “We do everything that the parent would do to make sure that all a child’s needs are met. Three of the homes are funded by Carrier Sekani Family Service, an aboriginal agency that has been delegated to provide services, and the other four homes are Ministry of Children and Family Development funded. About half of the children we serve are aboriginal.”

Aldoff continues, “We have two locations that use the ‘Family Home’ model. This type of home is suited for sibling groups of up to six children, which creates an entirely different atmosphere than what you get at a group home. In our group homes, we have children coming from all over the region from different parents, diverse home lives and cultures, and some are referred from the justice system. We also have a home for high-risk girls and one for high-risk boys.”

To be placed into the care of ENCAAS, a child will be referred by a government agency. The process involves the child, a social worker, and/or a case manager to match the child’s needs with the services provided by the organization. Each child has a unique care plan and individual programming.

“We take a very holistic approach to their care plan addressing their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs. Each child has a set of goals that they work toward. We make sure they’re either in main-stream school, doing correspondence courses, or working toward an occupation. We offer assistance with hygiene daily activities, a recreation program, a life skills program, employment, and semi-independent living support. If there are mental issues or needs that show up at any time during their tenure with us, we’ll put together a medical team for that. We have a spiritual advisor who acts as our cultural counselor. She teaches culture through smudges, sweats, arts and crafts, jewelry making, and dancing.” Aldoff states, “Again, we do everything that the parent would do.”

The Challenge

The challenge for ENCAAS revolves around providing quality, consistent caregivers and respecting the needs and wants of the children in their care. Aldoff reflects, “I’ve been working with children in group homes for the past twenty years. When I started, I was in a “street life” community and remember the kids talking about why they were not staying with and participating in the resources that were being

provided for them. Their main concern was that their wants weren't being met. They spoke about activities and rules going on in the homes that they could not live with. When they spoke to the staff about their wants and objections to the rules, they weren't able to meet them. Their reasons for not participating usually came down to issues of financial resources. I wanted a way to make sure that the people who are spending front line hours with the children are doing so in a way that the youth would accept the services being offered. Accreditation recognizes what we are doing to help protect the children and make sure that everyone is being taken care of in a consistent manner under a harm reduction philosophy."

The Journey

ENCAAS evaluated several different accrediting bodies before choosing to proceed with CARF. The organization chose CARF because of the people, the number of areas that could be accredited, and it seemed more user-friendly. Aldoff recounts, "I had a lot of questions about accreditation and the standards at the time. I did call a couple of different agencies, CARF just seemed more user-friendly to me. The people at CARF were very helpful and answered my questions easily. I thought, 'If they're this easy to talk to, maybe it would be easy to get through this process.' Accreditation was scary. We chose to become accredited in seven different areas. There is so much to document that it can be overwhelming. Once into the process, what happens is documenting current practices. It wasn't really that hard."

Implementing the Quality Standards

ENCAAS was originally accredited under seven different categories. The reason was to detail the kinds of services the organization provided. Each location had different programs such as community housing, community transitioning, case management, out-of-home treatment, and more.

"You can imagine how much work that was." Aldoff states, "There were binders and filing cabinets full of standards, proofs, forms, and documentation to prove our conformance to the standards. Dan Stavert, the chief advisor-accreditation standards, CARF Canada, was extremely helpful and our last survey team reviewed our previous surveys and advised us that we could choose to be placed in one accreditation area and blend in all of the different programs. It helped us tighten everything up."

The surveyors visited ENCAAS, reviewed its documentation for conformance to the standards, and completed the survey. "The surveyors were very professional, caring, and objective. They did not come in with preconceived ideas of what we were 'supposed' to be doing. They genuinely wanted to see our practices and who we were. We didn't have many recommendations, but the surveyors had many wonderful suggestions for us. Each one was the executive director of their own organization and wanted to share their knowledge. If we did not have a certain form, they would show us one of theirs. They were incredibly helpful. It made the accreditation process that much easier for us." Aldoff remembers, "After they completed the survey, we had a party and the staff were sad to see them leave."

Accreditation Promotes Quality

Aldoff has advice to organizations considering CARF accreditation, "Accreditation helps in so many ways. You need to look at accreditation as protection. As soon as you look at it from that perspective, then everything you do is helping protect those you provide care for, your team and you as a service provider. Everything CARF requires helps reinforce what we, as an organization, are legally responsible for so we can say, 'We serve each individual to the best of our ability. We have taken every precaution, and we have detailed documentation to prove it.' Once you get the documentation in place, it becomes easier to focus on the needs of your clientele, rather than having to focus on all the paperwork that has to be done. The clients are the ones who benefit most."