

CLIENT PERSPECTIVE

The strength of FTP is its people. From the Governance and Leadership teams to the client services staff; from the people who make the meals and manage the facilities to those who run the payroll and do the books, every single person at FTP brings with them the attitude that nothing short of excellence is good enough.

The following is an excerpt from a letter sent in by a woman who has used many of FTP's services over the years. She tells, in her own words, the impact that the staff at FTP have had on her—and so many others.

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Twenty-one years ago, I arrived at the shelter with my 6-month-old son. I was almost 19 years old.

During my stay, I was given court support. I got a restraining order against my son's father (one that stated he could not be within Orangeville for two years), help with filing custody papers and a worker came with me to court when I had to appear to testify in the assault trial. A letter was also written on my behalf in support of receiving priority status for government housing, which I received within four months. I never knew if my son's father would be bold enough to attempt to get to us and that is why the safety planning that the staff helped me put in place provided me with some comfort.

When I entered the shelter, they connected me to other community resources. The referral for priority status for government housing was such a blessing. They came to court with me which helped me to feel strong enough to testify. They arranged for me to speak with Orangeville Police, who reassured me that a flag had been placed on my address and that in the event of a 911 call coming in, they would respond quickly. I have seen FTP staff provide services from outside the box, during some very unique situations, where other agencies gave up or said “that client doesn't fit our agency.” What I am trying to say is, they don't just focus on what their agency does, and there is no tunnel vision. They want to ensure that every aspect of their client's lives are being supported and they will go the extra mile.

The staff are truly compassionate and empathic. I have found them to be very knowledgeable and continually learning. Many times, I have heard about the newest discovery/information that has been discovered about trauma and its effects on the brain or the newest therapy technics. I appreciate that FTP finds value in continually learning. I also appreciate that I have been able to reach out even when I was not presently receiving services. Having the ability to have a quick 15-minute, grounding conversation with a (crisis) counsellor during times of crisis has helped me to be able to plan and move through the crisis in a healthy/safe way. That has never been my experience with services outside of FTP.

I have been receiving services for 20 years and have had three counsellors (two are current employees). Trauma is very intimate and deeply personal. Trauma often involves shame or guilt, not things we easily talk about to even those closest to us. Many survivors have had at least one negative experience of attempting to tell their story (being told not to talk about it, not being believed, etc.). For these very reasons, plus many more, it is hard to sit down with a stranger and discuss these things. There needs to be a certain level of trust established before you can open up about the darkness. Any trusting relationship requires time for it to develop. Many agencies that offer counselling services have very high staff turnover.

Each of my relationships with the FTP Counsellors took time to build up and become what they were/are. The ability to continue my recovery journey at any time, even three years later, and pick up right where I left off is a blessing that I cannot explain. I believe it has been so vitally important in my recovery. I also wish to acknowledge that many of the staff in other roles are the same staff that have been there for years as well.

As soon as you walk it the building it feels warm, nurturing, and inviting. The energy in the building is positive. You can feel that the staff like their jobs and working for the agency. The energy of a place is important, especially when working on recovery.

I tell everyone FTP saved my life because it gave me the gift of recovery.