



# SAFE Year 2 (2021-2022) Executive Summary

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## Purpose of the SAFE Program

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**T**he Support and Aid for Families Electronically (SAFE) program emerged as the King's School of Social Work developed a formal remote learning plan in response to COVID-19. King's School of Social Work partnered with the Thames Valley District School Board to address gaps in community-based parent and caregiver support during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated school closures. The SAFE program offers parents and caregivers of school-aged youth access to no-cost, low-barrier, no-waitlist, accessible support provided by social work students. The social work students have supported families dealing with domestic violence, mental health, addictions, and social, emotional, and behavioural concerns with children in addition to parent coping and stress reduction strategies. Since the SAFE pilot program began it has provided increased access to social work services, taken pressure off community agencies in particular the school board, and created stable strong placements for social work students that allow them to provide up-to-date evidence-informed practice while honing their skills.

## Program Statistics

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In this second year of the SAFE program, four (4) Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students completed their practicum requirements through SAFE as did five (5) Master of Social Work (MSW) students. Two of the BSW students started in September and were joined in January by the other two BSW students and the five MSW students for a total of 9 students completing their practicum with SAFE in year 2. Therefore, when added to the seven students who were placed with SAFE in Year 1, SAFE has provided practicum learning opportunities for 16 social work students by the end of the second year.

SAFE provided support to 96 parents/guardians

in the second year. The majority, 39, identified as female while three identified as male, and the gender of 54 was not available. Twenty-one identified as White, two as Indigenous, one as Indigenous and White, one as Middle Eastern, one as Latino and the race of 70 was unavailable.

In comparison, the pilot year of this program received 59 referrals, 43 of which followed through and reflected the number of clients served. When adding the two years of the program, SAFE has supported a total of 139 parents by the end of its second year August 2022.

Moreover, in partnership with the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB), SAFE has expanded services to include youth aged 12 and older. SAFE served four (4) youth at the end of this academic year and is looking forward to expanding this service option in its third year.

This brings the total number of parents, youth and families who have received service through this program to 143.

## **Impact of the SAFE Program**

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As noted social work students have supported families dealing with domestic violence, mental health, addictions, social, emotional and behavioural issues with children in addition to parent coping and stress reduction strategies. The SAFE program has been an asset within the community by serving families trying to navigate long wait lists, caps on sessions,

and/or issues of accessibility. The SAFE program has been a relief to those families, but also to the community agencies. This program has provided social work students with a rich and diverse range of learning opportunities that will carry forward in their professional careers.

## **Future Need/ Growth**

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The continuation and expansion of the program would allow us to continue to support families in London and surrounding areas. SAFE will increase the number of social work students in year 3 to offer improved practicum learning opportunities while meeting the increased demand of families in need of support. Informed by the year 1 feasibility study, we will be looking for options to improve access to information about SAFE for parents and other professionals, to improve our referral processes, and to increase communication between referring professionals in the school board and SAFE students providing

service. We will consider expanding service provision to include in-person support when most appropriate, as well as consider the possibility of groups and walk-in services. SAFE will continue to develop protocols related to safety and confidentiality with virtual service provision and evaluate efforts to balance service numbers/caseload numbers, student placement numbers, cancellations and retention rates while maintaining the commitment to no-waitlist barrier-free service.