

When it comes to Five Counties Children's Centre, that provides such outpatient and community based services as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech language therapy, augmentative communication services, recreation, social work, resource teachers, pediatric medical assessments and specialized clinics, serving clients sometimes requires creativity.

Seven-year-old Isaac has been receiving assistance from Five Counties since he was one. He has lived with a number of challenges including hand-eye co-ordinating, impaired hearing and Attention Deficit Disorder. The support he received from the Centre shifted when he started school. His mother Mara knows that getting professional services will do more. She is desperate to get him on the waiting list for speech therapy.

Although the agency had to cease face-to-face services, its team has been working remotely and remained available to support children and families using telemedicine. Therapists have been remarkable at developing and adapting their services to a virtual model, and have continued to provide connection, reassurance and support to families.

For example, Isaac was provided with a sensory pillow and a squishy ball to absorb some of his restless energy. Staff have also provided Mara with a variety of suggestions for behaviour modification and she recently enjoyed a course on dealing with a "spirited child," leaving feeling validated that she was a good parent doing all she could for her only child.

"While our sites are closed, be assured that we are continuing to do all we can to address the immediate needs of our clients like Isaac," shared Lyn Giles, director of fund development.

"For years our communities have supported our kids and their families to get the treatment they need. We know that virtual care and telephone consultation is not a temporary solution for supporting families during this emergency closure. At Five Counties, services online and by phone will be our new normal and will continue to be the backbone of our service delivery model for several months as we gradually reopen our sites."

With health and community services providers now able to open or expand services, Five Counties has slowly started to provide in-person services to families whose children are in urgent need as part of its three-stage reopening plan. It is a slow, staged process that safeguards the wellbeing of clients, families and staff.

But it's not just a case of playing 'catch-up' with client services.

The pandemic is also wreaking havoc on charity coffers.

"First we had to cancel all meetings, which had an impact on St. Dave's Diner which hosted our morning meetings," said Lindsay Optimist Club president Mike McGregor.

This was followed by cancelling the Leahy concert that was scheduled for the Academy Theatre for Performing Arts in March.

"This was going to raise significant money for us, but now will cost us some money," said McGregor, adding that having to also cancel April's adult dodge ball tournament