

# The Children's Group

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## **GENERAL DESCRIPTION:**

A support group for children, aged 5-12, who have a close family member living with cancer. The family attends the group together, and there is a concurrent support group session for the parents. Art therapy activities are used and there is an educational lesson for children led by the Nurse.

## **RATIONALE:**

Special expertise and interventions are required in working with children because of their varying developmental stages and levels of understanding. Traditional 'talk' therapies are often not as helpful for children as expressing themselves through art, music, and play.

The Children's Group provides specialized support to families during this vulnerable time in their lives. It provides families with a place to connect with others; address their questions and concerns; and learn more about cancer, its treatments, and healthy ways of coping.

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:**

- Provide an opportunity for parents/ guardians to learn and share information and find support in the group
- Enhance children's understanding of cancer and its treatments, and dispel myths and misconceptions about the disease
- Provide an opportunity for children to experience the Cancer Centre and staff as supportive and helpful
- Encourage open communication about cancer in the group and within the family
- Reduce isolation families may be experiencing by connecting them with other families and resources that may be helpful
- Teach and provide families with helpful tools to use at home to communicate openly about cancer, reduce stress, adopt healthy lifestyle
- Help children explore and develop coping strategies for dealing with the changes and challenges resulting from the family member's illness.
- Increase family's ability to cope with cancer in their family

## **REGISTRATION PROCESS:**

### **Criteria**

- School aged children (5 to 12 years)
- Children must be independent enough to use the washroom, be away from their parent(s) for the afternoon, and engage with the educational and art materials

- Children must have a close relative living with cancer
- Children must have an awareness of cancer in the family and a willingness to be a part of the Group

### **How to register**

- Interested families can contact a Patient & Family Counselling office and they are pre-registered. The Centre secretary puts their name on the registration list and notifies the Counselor / Social worker
- Registrations will be confirmed by the counselor the week before the Children's Group

### **Where are groups located**

- At this time groups are offered at the Cancer Centre's in Victoria, Surrey, Abbotsford and Vancouver.
- Interested families can contact their nearest Patient & Family Counselling office for more details or to register