

**Organization:** Blake Boulton Youth Outreach Service  
**Presenter:** Rod Cohen, Co-Founder and Executive Director  
**Sponsor:** Gren MacDonald

**Project:** To enhance the extensive outreach and in-depth counselling with vulnerable and volatile high risk youth and their families.

### **Background and Aims of the Organization:**

BBYOS was established in 1989 with the goal to provide comprehensive services to high-risk youth and their families in the Blake Boulton community; a high-density low-income area of east Toronto. Now in its 22nd year they are working with young people between 10-25 years of age who come from across the entire city - youth who are at risk of getting in serious trouble with the law, dropping out of school, not securing fulfilling employment and, most importantly, not reaching their potential in life.

#### **BBYOS's Objectives**

- To provide therapy and counselling services to high-risk youth and their families.
- To prevent young people from using violence to resolve conflict, from getting into trouble with the law, and from abusing alcohol and drugs
- To help troubled young people become employable and find meaningful jobs
- To help troubled young people stay in school.
- To help troubled young people develop healthy interpersonal relationships.

The majority of their clientele must deal with an overwhelming array of stresses and difficulties. Each and every day the staff help them work through the effects of debilitating poverty, sexual and physical abuse, crippling mental health issues, and violence. They help young people to leave criminal and anti-social lifestyles, gain an empathic understanding of their actions and establish positive alternatives.

BBYOS is painfully aware that gun related assaults and homicides are far too common and often involve assailants hardly old enough to be out of high school. BBYOS has been working intensively for over twenty years with the youth who are at great risk of becoming involved in this horrific violence. These are their challenges.

The Toronto Star, Toronto Sun, *NOW Magazine* and the *National Post* have all published feature articles about how this operation has quietly been connecting to these youth and providing them with intensive long-term counselling/therapy and support.

The result of their work has been the dramatic reduction or complete elimination of heinous and socially destructive behaviour among their clientele. BBYOS has witnessed the development of strong self-esteem in these kids which helps them make much healthier decisions and diverts them from violence and criminal involvement.

*BBYOS does not offer short-term solutions, programs and projects.* “As we know empirically and from our experience, what these young people need is a valuable therapeutic relationship without time constraints and limitations, one that is based on an ongoing commitment to help them through the trials and tribulations of making serious, sustainable changes in their lives. This is what BBYOS is all about.” *Rod Cohen*

Each year they work with around 200 individuals at a modest cost of approximately \$1600 per client, almost insignificant compared to the \$40-90,000 for a young person involved in the criminal justice system and other societal care. Their clients are given the opportunity to deal with their histories of abuse, neglect, aggression, substance abuse and hopefully avoid the pitfalls of a life of violence and crime.

A grant of \$10,000-12,000 from *The Funding Network-Toronto* will go directly towards the budget for the highly skilled and experienced therapist/counsellor needed to work with their clientele. In addition to salary, other costs which support this work include client-related expenses such as transportation for school appointments, job interviews, meals and nutrition, and various emergency needs.

**Budget:**

Salary and Benefits	\$62,000
Transportation (TTC)	1,200
Nourishment and Activities	1,000
Emergency Needs	500
Professional Development	700
Miscellaneous Expenses	500
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$65,900</b>

*“For over two decades we have existed without the core funding of government programs or other large funders such as United Way. Rather our success has been in developing ongoing relationships with private foundations, corporations, businesses, community organizations and service clubs, and individuals who recognize the challenge in creating real change in these young people by supporting our work. At this time the majority of the funds for this position have been secured including a special offer to match funds raised by TFN. Thus the money raised at your event would ensure having the highly skilled therapist our clientele so desperately need.”*

**Contact:**

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