

IAFN's Spotlight-on-a-Member



Tanya Smith, NP-Pediatrics

LOCATION: Toronto, Canada

WORK SETTING: The Hospital for Sick Children Ambulatory Center and Child and Youth Advocacy Center

FORENSIC NURSING ROLE: Tanya is the Co-Director of the Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect Program at Sickkids.

YEARS OF IAFN MEMBERSHIP: On and off since 2005

Tell us more about your forensic nursing role:

As a Nurse Practitioner and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, I provide medical evaluation of children and adolescents where sexual abuse/assault concerns have arisen. I am actively involved with the newly developed Child and Youth Advocacy Center in Toronto providing medical examinations and consultations. I provide leadership, consultation and training in pediatric sexual assault/abuse to the Ontario Network of Sexual Assault Care Centers. I have testified in court and have been qualified as an Expert Witness on the medical evaluation of child and adolescent sexual abuse/assault. I am an adjunct lecturer at the Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto, Nurse Practitioner Program. I am a part-time instructor and course developer of the Pediatric Examiner Sexual Violence Core Education at BCIT.

Why did they become a forensic nurse or decided to work with forensic nurses?

I became drawn to forensic nursing in nursing school in which I worked with a psychiatrist who was conducting a group for young girls who had been sexually abused. In addition in nursing school I was caring for a little girl who was a victim of physical assault and became quite drawn to better understanding how I as a nurse could help these children. When I obtained a job at Sickkids I immediately sought out a position with the sexual assault team.... And the rest is history.

What do you enjoy most about forensic nursing, or why do you continue to work in the forensic nursing field?

I enjoy the very rewarding aspect of working with children/youth and their families when they may be at a vulnerable state in their lives; being able to help them work through a very difficult event is what has been the biggest draw. In addition I have enjoyed working with various partners within the system, child protection, police, mental health and crown attorneys. The multidisciplinary approach to the work has been inspirational.

Sheila Early shares her reasoning behind "Spotlighting" Tanya:

I am "Spotlighting" Tanya for many reasons, the primary one is that she is so dedicated to furthering the education of healthcare professionals in child abuse and neglect in Canada. She has a full time job, also teaches in a number of settings, yet is always willing to respond to those needing education or information. She is one of the most well-known Canadian experts in her field and has been the educator for nurses, nurse practitioners, physicians and specialists for many years. She has changed the welfare and health outcomes for Canada's children by sharing her expertise, knowledge, educational skills and her deep respect for the most vulnerable of our society.

