

## **Training on Attachment Based Family Therapy (ABFT) as a Treatment for Young People with Eating Disorders in Ireland.**

I attended advanced training in ABFT in Drexel University Philadelphia on the 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019, funded by a grant from the Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents. The workshop was delivered by an expert in ABFT, Dr. Suzanne Levy of the Drexel Institute. The 3-day Advanced Workshop is a follow-up, intensive supervision workshop for clinicians who have already completed the 3 day Introductory level training in ABFT and have experience in delivering ABFT to young people and families. This advanced workshop aims to advance the therapists' ABFT skills. Participants discuss person of the therapist issues as they relate to ABFT and learn about the use of emotion-deepening skills in the context of ABFT. During the advanced training, a certified ABFT trainer provides supervision. The training was of excellent standard.

Following this training I used the ABFT model to treat a number of eating disorder cases at the CAREDS service in Cork, Ireland. CAREDS is a specialist service providing intensive outpatient treatment for children and adolescents with eating disorders. The service aims to reduce the need for, and shorten the length of, inpatient admissions for treatment of eating disorders. In line with the NICE guideline recommendations, the service uses Family Based Treatment (FBT) and Multifamily Group Therapy (MFGT) as first line treatments. However, it is felt that the ABFT model can be a useful second line treatment for those cases who have not had a good response to first line treatment.

In a number of cases at the CAREDS service, ABFT has been used to treat young people with atypical eating disorders, where other treatments had not been fully successful. Very good outcomes were achieved in some of these cases, both in terms of the symptoms of eating disorders and in the young person's ability to regulate emotion without having to use restriction as a 'coping mechanism'. ABFT also brought about significant improvement in parent child relationships, which underpinned the improvement in the young people's increased competence in emotional regulation.

In June 2019, a meeting was held by Zoom between clinicians at the CAREDS service and Dr. Guy Diamond and Dr. Suzanne Levy from Drexel University to discuss how to progress the provision of ABFT for eating disorder cases in Ireland. It was agreed it would make sense to identify clinicians on the newly established eating disorder specialist teams who are trained in ABFT and then plan to set up a group supervision that would centre on ABFT for eating disorder cases. We expect that we will have sufficient numbers in 2020 to establish an eating disorder specialist supervision group for ABFT in Ireland. The funding provided by the Association for Professionals in Services to Adolescents played a pivotal role in allowing clinicians in CAREDS to progress the plans to provide ABFT for eating disorder cases nationwide.