

Vita Centre Mississauga, Canada



"Penelope keeps us all on track."

About Vita Centre

Since 1991, Vita Centre has provided support, education, and counselling for young pregnant and parenting families with children up to six years of age in the Ontario cities of Mississauga, Brampton, and Caledon, an area near Toronto with a combined population of 1.5 million people.

Each year, Vita Centre supports over 600 individuals and provides them with the skills and knowledge they need to help increase their parenting capacity and reach their goals.

Along with individual counselling, parenting group programs, and assistance with high school completion, Vita Centre also provides referral services, transportation assistance, and child care.

Reasons Penelope was chosen

- Cloud-based database that provides a single source of truth for an organization offering multiple services
- Recommended by other similar organizations already using the software
- Flexible system for entering case notes and tracking client demographics and other data required by funders

Benefits from Penelope

- Records now stored in one secure system that provides accurate overview of clients and access to data reporting
- Configurable system that can be adjusted in real time to meet changing funder requirements
- Intuitive system that provides ease of use for staff to enter case notes, track group attendance, and log time spent in the community

Introduction

Vita Centre is a nonprofit charity that's dedicated to providing excellent support, education, and counselling for pregnant and parenting youth.

Since 1991, the organization has been offering free programs to young parents that provide them with an environment of support and encouragement, as well as a place of belonging.

The vision of the organization is to create a community where pregnant and parenting youth will be accepted and supported, allowing positive outcomes for their child.

In 2014, Vita Centre selected Penelope case management software as their client information system, and we recently asked Susan Robins, Program Manager at the Canadian nonprofit, to share some of the benefits they've realized from using the system.

Why did Vita Centre choose Penelope?

A couple of reasons - we looked at a few case management systems, and Penelope seemed to suit our needs the best. Also, it was recommended to us by organizations with a similar mandate as ours, such as other organizations that support young parents.

What was your organization using to track client information prior to choosing Penelope?

A combination of Microsoft Word and Excel. The biggest challenge was responding to funder requests for data that we either did not track, or tracked in a very makeshift way that was inconsistently used within the team and across time.

What are the pain points that Penelope is solving for Vita Centre?

We really needed a database for tracking client demographics. Shortly after we started using Penelope for this purpose, one of our funders asked for even more detailed client demographics and we were quickly able to make the modifications to our Penelope Intake Wizard to put that information in and then report on it.

We were so relieved that the change in demand from that funder came after we had purchased Penelope, or we would have either not been able to fulfill their request or gone through a lot of pain to get that requested data.



Another challenge was our case notes. They were done on, and saved as, Word documents which resulted in a very disorganized, inconsistent case note and client tracking system over time for all our counsellors. Penelope keeps us all on track.

How is Penelope used by your staff? What has their experience been like using the software?

Penelope is easy to use for case notes, tracking attendance in our group programs, and for tracking informal events such as presentations, community outreach, and so on.



Since 1991, Vita Centre has been providing pregnant and parenting youth in the Toronto area with support services, education, and counselling to achieve positive outcomes for their children.

“Having Penelope track the data that we need to report to our funders has been invaluable. We have saved countless hours of time.”



What are some of the benefits you've seen from using Penelope?

Penelope is very intuitive for the most part. When on-boarding new staff (and even students on placement with us), the time needed to get up and running on Penelope is less time than it takes to read through all of our HR policies!

Having Penelope track the data that we need to use to report to our funders has been invaluable. We have saved countless hours of time because we built our database to suit our reporting needs.

This means the information is readily available, even with short notice from our funders, *and* we feel confident that the information we are reporting is accurate.

Do you have any recommendations for other organizations who are considering Penelope?

Take advantage of the 'sandbox' stage when you get your new Penelope database.

One of our biggest challenges was trying to anticipate how we could and would use this great new case management system, especially since we were coming from having no real system at all. Using Penelope in the sandbox helped us smooth out some rough spots for our team before we went live.

Would you recommend Penelope to other organizations?

For sure!

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