



About Gemma Services

Gemma Services was formed in 2019 when two long-standing nonprofits - Silver Springs – Martin Luther School and theVillage - united to operate as one organization serving at-risk youth, families, and communities. Guided by the vision of a world in which all feel valued and have the tools to realize their highest potential, Gemma’s mission is to change lives by transforming hope into action for children, youth, and families facing emotional and behavioral challenges.

Gemma services upwards of 3,000 youth and families each year in the Greater Philadelphia area through various programs including education programs, mental health services in residential and community settings, foster care and adoption services, and prevention programs.



Staff have shared that Ukeru has been a great tool for their toolbox. It has given them a better understanding of trauma and the effects it has on the brain. Staff have commented on how the protection from the pads gives them a sense of comfort and helps them take a minute to know they are safe, which helps them better support the children.

Sarah Kline, LCSW

*Vice President of Residential Services
Gemma Services*

Looking for Solutions

Prior to implementing Ukeru in 2018 in their Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) serving ages 6-14, Gemma reported having over 600 physical interventions each year and over 100 staff injuries per year. “We had utilized some restraint reduction techniques but had not had the culture shift we knew we needed to have a lasting impact,” recalled Sarah Kline, LCSW, Vice President of Residential Services.

As an agency, they had utilized a trauma-informed perspective and felt that was an important aspect to the care they provide. **“We were drawn to the Ukeru framework that emphasizes the need to understand each individual, their developmental needs, examining what is happening in the brain and understanding the group interactions,”** explained Kline.

Working with Ukeru

Gemma first had a group of trainers go through Ukeru training in September of 2018. Strategically, this group included supervisors and other key stakeholders in order to create internal experts to fully understand and train others on the use of Ukeru. From there, they conducted multiple training sessions to train all of their PRTF staff initially and went “live” with Ukeru in November of 2018. To ensure buy-in, they offered multiple training times, food and incentives to create a culture of excitement and curiosity.

Adjusting their organizational culture took a lot of intentional modeling, coaching, and debriefing of incidents. “We added a question to our physical intervention debriefing process that asked about how they utilized various Ukeru techniques, prevention strategies and de-escalation strategies. One strategy we have implemented is having round table discussions around key program components. One of the first was on Comfort vs. Control. This discussion reviewed the concepts and talked through what it would look like in practice,” shared Kline.



Our experience with the Ukeru team has been wonderful! In the training, some of our staff have reported a more thorough understanding of both trauma and behaviorism than any other training they have been a part of in their professional careers of over twenty years.

Sarah Kline, LCSW

*Vice President of Residential Services
Gemma Services*



**Staff feel safe
and confident**

55%

**Physical
intervention
reduction**



**Families
appreciate the
use of Ukeru**

Results

The overall results have been remarkable. Gemma has seen a reduction in the number of physical interventions across their PRTF program and a reduction in staff and client injuries every year since using Ukeru. **In their first year, Gemma saw a 24% reduction in physical interventions, 44% reduction in their second year and 55% reduction the last two years.** “In 2018, we had over 600 physical interventions and in 2021 we had 167,” Kline added.

“We’ve also seen the overall sense of physical interventions change. Our program understanding trauma and effects on children’s brains changes how we interact and work with the children. Families/ clients have shared they are pleased as a program that we want to do everything possible to not have to physically intervene with their children,” Kline proudly shared. Thus, Gemma has successfully transformed their culture with the use of Ukeru to be more trauma-informed. They have done this by improving on-boarding and supervision practices, creating roundtable discussions around trauma-informed environments and encouraging rich discussions. “We have found that focusing attention on prevention strategies, understanding behavioral principles and developmental needs helps to create a milieu with less physical interventions and staff injuries,” concluded Kline.