

MEDIA RELEASE

A Look Back at Mental Health & Addictions Advances in the North East Local Health Integration Network in 2018

January 4, 2018– Over the past year, many partners throughout the North East Local Health Integration Network (North East LHIN) have come together to improve access, enhance coordination, and strengthen system sustainability when it comes to mental health and addiction services.

The North East LHIN salutes the work of the Regional Mental Health Advisory Council, made up of more than 20 health professionals and people with lived experience from across the region, in moving the yardstick forward on several key initiatives. Other key partners who have collaborated on projects include: the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Ontario Telemedicine Network, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, as well as local branches, and Health Quality Ontario.

“By working together we are coming up with solutions to help Northerners with their mental health and addiction challenges, as well as overcome our huge geographic region,” said North East LHIN Chief Executive Officer Jeremy Stevenson. “Thank you to our partners and our Regional Mental Health and Addiction Advisory Council for moving the work forward.”

Some key initiatives include:

- 1) **Regional Opioid Strategy and Rapid Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Clinics:** The North East LHIN’s Regional Opioid Strategy is designed to meet the rising rates of opioid use disorder, accidental overdoses, hospitalizations and hospital emergency room visits across Northeastern Ontario. The strategy was developed by the Regional Advisory Council which continues to work with local Opioid Task Forces across the region to support implementation, ensuring Northerners have timely and equitable access to care. As part of the strategy the North East LHIN has provided funding for Rapid Addiction Medicine clinics and new community withdrawal management services.

The Rapid Access Medicine model is designed to initiate therapy for substance use disorders, mainly opioid or alcohol use, and then triage people to the most appropriate ongoing care provider. The North East LHIN’s strategy uses a “hub and spoke” model, in which Rapid Access Medicine clinics are located within four urban centres - **Sudbury (705-523-7100 ext.1875), Sault Ste. Marie (705-759-3434 ext. 7200), Timmins (705-531- 7226), and North Bay (705-472-6515)**, with links to smaller communities to help develop capacity there. While the clinics take referrals, people do not need one, and one can call or walk-in to receive help. The LHIN has also provided additional funding for Health Sciences North to take on a regional role supporting the Rapid Access Medicine clinics.

- 2) **Two new, free psychotherapy services for Northerners:** Feeling low, depressed or anxious and want to learn new skills to manage? The North East LHIN is supporting two new, free self-help psychotherapy services. [BounceBack](#), a telephone-coaching program with workbooks and videos and [Big White Wall](#), an online peer support and self-management tool. Both programs, funded by the Government of Ontario for its residents, are designed to help adults and youth with depression and anxiety. Since the summer, members of the Regional Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council, North East LHIN staff, Ontario Telemedicine Network and local branches of the Canadian Mental Health Association have formed working groups in each of the sub-regions, meeting monthly to help build awareness of these services which provide skill-building and cognitive behaviour therapy. For more information go to [BounceBack](#) or call 1-866-345-0224, or check out the Big White Wall at [bigwhitewall.ca/](#)
- 3) **New Opioid Prescribing Hotline for Clinicians in the North East LHIN**
Thanks to Health Quality Ontario, family physicians and nurse practitioners in the North East LHIN who need real-time point-of-care support when making decisions about opioid prescribing can access a new Opioid Prescribing Hotline at **1-866-939-6464**. From Monday through Friday (8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET), a drug information pharmacist will answer questions about opioid tapering and switching, drug interactions and withdrawal management. A response is guaranteed within four hours.
- 4) **A new way of measuring the client and patient experience with Ontario Perception of Care Tool for Mental Health and Addictions:** Incorporating this new tool has been a joint effort between Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, North East LHIN and health service providers who meet monthly to work on improvement and implementation initiatives. It offers a validated, comprehensive, and standardized way to measure client perception of care in the mental health and addiction system so that future improvements can be made in treating and caring for people. Thank you to our health service providers for incorporating this important feedback mechanism into their work.
- 5) **Standardizing how we diagnose and treat addictions with the Staged Screening and Assessment:**
Thanks to collaboration between the Regional Council and Centre for Addiction and Mental Health new assessment tools are now being used by North East LHIN providers offering a sound foundation for treatment, planning and referrals including:
 - **Global Appraisal of Individual Needs - Short Screener**, which quickly identifies possible mental health and substance use issues requiring further exploration.
 - **Modified Mini Screener for Adults and Problem Oriented Screening Instrument for Teens**, which gathers more information specifically surrounding potential mental health issues and can facilitate a referral for a mental health specific assessment.
 - **Global Appraisal of Individual Needs**, a comprehensive assessment allowing the client to share their life circumstances across a broad range of areas, with a particular focus on substance use and concurrent disorders.

With these services you receive the same assessment, wherever you might be located which improves treatment outcomes and options, as recommendations are based on what is needed and not what is available.

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