

## NE LHIN Helping to Reduce Wait Times in Hospital Emergency Department with Programs Targeting Substance Abuse

### *Harm Reduction Model offer Community Care and Supports in Sudbury*

**October 6, 2016** -- The North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN) continues its work to connect people who have been impacted by chronic substance abuse with the care they need in community rather than in a hospital emergency department (ED).

A LHIN-funded harm reduction model is now treating clients in Sudbury. This care approach aims to reduce harms associated with substance abuse – health, social and economic consequences such as job loss, family breakdown, risk of homelessness, and social isolation.

Preliminary numbers show that repeat visits to Health Sciences North's ED for substance abuse have declined by 12 per cent since the program began last November thanks to a \$1 million investment from the LHIN. This is good news for both the individuals in need as well as the larger health care system, as a reduction in repeat substance abuse visits means less pressure on the ED and shorter wait times for other patients requiring care.

“This unique (harm reduction) program is helping people in community, by treating the whole person,” said Louise Paquette, CEO of the NE LHIN. “Not only is their addiction addressed but also their social, physical and mental health needs as well.”

In Sudbury, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Sudbury-Manitoulin operates a day program, from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. for eight individuals who are chronically homeless or at



Dr. Jeff Turnbull (second from left), Chief of Clinical Quality at Health Quality Ontario, and Sudbury Physician Dr. Mike Franklyn (second from right) visit with Sudbury's Harm Reduction program clients . The photo was taken during Dr. Turnbull's visit in June. Dr. Turnbull helped establish Ottawa Inner City Health, which is devoted to improving health for people who are chronically homeless.

risk of homelessness and are alcohol dependent. Open seven-days a week, clients can access primary care, meals, programming and social support along with supervised administration of alcohol on a daily basis.

“Most individuals have had a long history of alcohol dependency, drinking non-beverage forms of alcohol such as mouthwash and rubbing alcohol; have been homeless and have been frequent users of emergency services,” said Patty MacDonald, Director of Operations. “We’re seeing their health and housing stabilize with the day program, which is tremendous. The next step is to open a home – we are currently working on finding the right location.”

Statistics gathered by Health Sciences North show a change in ED use by harm reduction program clients. For instance, prior to joining the program, eight people accessed the ED 215 times in a nine month period.

Afterwards, they made 32 visits to the ED in a similar period – this is an estimated cost savings to the system of \$50,000 for ED visits alone. Their rate of hospitalization also declined going from 32 times admitted to 15 times, while mental health outpatient presentations went from 390 visits to 32 visits within this same timeframe.

## FACTS

- One of the ways the success of LHIN performance is measured is through an accountability agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, now known as our Ministry-LHIN Accountability Agreement (MLAA). Embedded in the MLAA are 14 performance indicators, seven monitoring indicators, and two indicators which are under development.
- The latest MLAA shows that the performance indicator “Repeat unscheduled ED visits within 30 days for Substance Abuse” improved from 29.6% to 28.6% for the overall NE LHIN. Health Science North’s individual performance for this indicator has decreased from 40% to 28%.
- The NE LHIN posts all provincial targets and achievements each quarter. Click [here](#) to see the latest or visit [www.nelhin.on.ca/accountability/performance.aspx](http://www.nelhin.on.ca/accountability/performance.aspx)
- The NE LHIN continues to evaluate and monitor the harm reduction program to ensure the model reduces ED visits, hospital admissions and health system costs.
- A new North East Mental Health and Addictions Collaborative is being established this month. Reporting to the NE LHIN’s CEO, it will develop a plan to implement the recommendations from Dr. Brian Rush’s Addictions Review along with those outlined in a mental health Blueprint undertaken by Health Sciences North and North Bay Regional Health Centre. The review contains a series of recommendations (read the [Regional Executive Summary](#) or go to [www.nelhin.on.ca](http://www.nelhin.on.ca))

-30-

For more information or to arrange interviews, contact Communications Officer Lara Bradley at [Lara.Bradley@lhins.on.ca](mailto:Lara.Bradley@lhins.on.ca) or 705-207-1259.