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A New Community Crisis Model Opens In Sudbury



A new approach to providing community-based mental health crisis care, involving several organizations, is leading to a dramatic increase in the number of people in Greater Sudbury accessing mental health care services.

At the site of Health Sciences North's (HSN) Sudbury Mental Health and Addictions Centre, Crisis Intervention Services provides urgent mental health care for those feeling overwhelmed and offers a calm and more private environment away from the hospital's busy emergency department.

Working with the North East Local Health Integration Network (NE LHIN), who invested in the model to bring urgent mental health services closer to where people need it – in the community, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), and the Greater Sudbury Police Service (GSPS), this service has seen a 102 per cent increase in calls. Visits to the centre and counseling by phone have increased by 61 per cent. In addition, youth visits have tripled over the previous year.

A key component of this new Community Crisis Model is the training the CMHA and HSN staff have delivered to members of the Greater Sudbury Police Service on how best to respond to crisis calls, the challenges faced by people with mental health and addictions, as well as how to identify which people are best suited for the Cedar Street location or the mobile crisis unit.

"The officers have been very receptive. Responding to mental health calls in the community is becoming more frequent," said Sarah Gauthier, one of the instructors from CMHA. "We are providing practical tools to help recognize mental health symptoms and techniques so that officers can respond confidently and quickly. We are also trying to provide an awareness of what someone goes through when experiencing mental illness."

In addition, the CMHA and HSN have also developed booklets officers can carry in their back pocket when out on calls. Approximately 300 officers and staff have completed the training so far.

As awareness of the new site continues to grow and CMHA's Patient Navigator is stationed in HSN's Emergency Department, it is expected many more clients will see out Crisis Intervention Services in Sudbury.

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