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The Royal Ottawa and CHEO join forces with others to build bridges with local youth



The Royal Ottawa Health Care Group (The Royal) and the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) are joining forces with other mental health service providers including Ottawa Public Health (OPH) and the Youth Services Bureau (YSB) for the first time, pooling their unique resources and expertise to offer an intensive treatment program for teenagers in crisis, outside

the hospital setting.

Known as "The Bridges Project", this new clinical service will make mental health treatment services available to those who need it to address a gap in current services for youth suffering from a mental health crisis, and who are in need of intensive treatment. As youth with mental illness are discharged from hospitals they will have a direct connection to the ongoing support and treatment they, and their families, need.

The Bridges Project offers youth and families a full range of treatment services based on the expertise and resources of all four organizations. This includes a variety of therapy interventions focusing on their recovery and wellness. These interventions will be provided by a treatment team that includes psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, child and youth counselors and occupational therapists.

This team will provide a seamless, cost-effective, integrated response. In addition to focusing on treatment services, Bridges can help prevent relapse and readmission to hospital through education and support services. The Bridges Project will help more than 150 teenagers in the Ottawa community who fall into this gap every year.

The teens that would benefit from this program are among the most vulnerable youth in the community. They represent the most repeat visits to the Emergency room and the community based crisis services, have the most complex needs for mental health services and have the longest and most complicated admissions to the mental health in-patient units. The program supports youth aged 12 up to their 18th birthday.

Studies have shown that the earlier a person receives treatment for mental illness, the better their chances for recovery. Significant early intervention, like that offered by Bridges, can put youth on the path to wellness before their conditions worsen. This will benefit our patients and the mental health system long into the future.

While better helping the mental health of these young people, the Bridges Project will also relieve some of the pressures being placed on hospitals and offer youth a less intrusive option for receiving care. Fewer hospital stays will allow them to maintain an amount of normalcy in their lives, by using services closer to home and more easily accessible in the community as demand increases.

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