

Promising Future: Mental Health and Addictions Strategy for Nova Scotia

“Change is possible and is indeed happening.”

-Maureen MacDonald
NS Minister of Health

On May 15, 2012, the government of Nova Scotia released its strategy for a new approach to management of mental health in the province. **Together We Can: The Plan to improve mental health and addictions care for Nova Scotians** is an ambitious blueprint for change in our health care system. The strategy is focused on health promotion, early intervention, closing gaps in the system, improved cultural and other competencies, peer and community and other supports and reducing stigma through greater public awareness (NS Health Research Foundation).



Annual General Meeting

The Canadian Mental Health Association Kings Branch

On June 5th, 2012

At 7:00 pm

St. James Anglican Church

Lower Hall 18 Prospect Ave Kentville, NS

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A Focus on Children and Youth

Five priority areas are identified in the new mental health and addictions strategy: children and youth; shorter waits and better care; aboriginal and diverse communities; working together differently; and reducing stigma. This report will centre on the approach the strategy takes towards children and youth.

The strategy identifies “actions” to be taken which will lead to improvements in the health care system:

Birth and the early years- identification of problems at a young age:

- ACTION:

Every child in Nova Scotia will be screened at 18 months of age to pick up any delays or developmental concerns, in order to identify these early and improve outcomes.

Intervening early in onset to address behavioral issues- Strongest Families is a 12-week, phone-based program using trained coaches to work with children with mild to moderate behavior and anxiety problems, and their families:

- ACTION:

The successful Strongest Families program, currently available through mental health programs at the IWK and in Cape Breton, will be expanded throughout the province in all district health authorities so families have access to it no matter where they live.

SchoolsPlus- based on the vision that schools are suitable places for government and other services to be delivered to families.

- ACTIONS:

Mental health clinicians such as a psychologist, a nurse, or a social worker will be placed in the SchoolsPlus family of schools in school board districts to identify mental health problems early and work with teachers and staff to treat mild and moderate problems, while referring significant difficulties to the local mental health program.

The Departments of Health and Wellness and Education, district health authorities and the IWK will work together to support evidence-based health promotion programs in schools and to support the development of school policies related to mental health, substance use and gambling.

By Heather Frenette

The entire report can be accessed at
http://www.gov.ns.ca/health/mhs/reports/together_we_can.pdf



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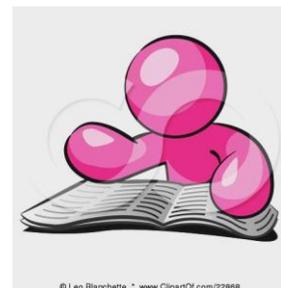
A Mental Health Perspective

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Proposed Anti-Bullying Legislation

Bullying is a major problem for young people. It can occur anywhere: at school, outside of school, and online. It can take over their lives to the point where some youth have actually committed suicide. Some MLA's in the Nova Scotia government have proposed private members bills to combat bullying. The three bills being proposed are the Safer Schools Act, Cyberbullying Intervention Act, and the Stand Up Against Bullying Day Act.

The purpose of the **Safer Schools Act** is to make students feel safe while attending school, to teach students to develop relationships that are healthy, to help students make good choices and to help students be more successful at learning. The act defines bullying as "any direct behaviour, comment, act or gesture, including those made through the use of social media, intended to injure, hurt, oppress, intimidate or ostracize, and includes cyberbullying."

If the act passes, policies and guidelines may be developed around disciplinary actions taken in response to inappropriate student behaviour. They are: to provide for serious actions to be taken in the event of repeated or more severe inappropriate behaviour, offer assistance to students and parents who are affected by inappropriate behaviour and to assist students who are guilty of behaviour that is inappropriate and to help them develop relationships that are healthy, make good choices, and be successful in their learning while attending school.

The **Cyberbullying Intervention Act** provides for legal consequences to be taken against those who are guilty of cyberbullying. For people 18 or over, a fine is levied up to \$1,000 for a first offence. For a second offense a fine up to \$2,000 will be levied against the guilty person. For those under 18 upon first offence, a fine up to a \$300 will be given. For a second offence a fine up to a \$1,000 will be given.

The **Stand UP Against Bullying Day Act** proposes that throughout Nova Scotia in September on the second Thursday of every school year that this day will be set aside for the purpose of keeping and observing anti-bullying against other students.

By Tony Legere

References:

Eddie Orrell, Cape Breton North. "Safer Schools Act." Office of the Legislative Counsel, Nova Scotia House of Assembly. 17 April 2012. 12 May 2012.

<http://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/61st_4th/1st_read/b028.htm>

Allan Mac MacMaster, Inverness. "Cyberbullying Intervention Act.

" Office of the Legislative Counsel, Nova Scotia House of Assembly. 17 April 2012. 12 May 2012.

<http://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/61st_4th/1st_read/b027.htm>

The Honourable Jamie Baillie, Cumberland South. "Stand Up Against Bullying Day Act." Office of the Legislative Counsel, Nova Scotia House of Assembly. 17 April 2012. 12 May 2012.

<http://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/61st_4th/1st_read/b026.htm>



Moving Video

Last month it was reported that our editor, Heather Frenette, received an Inspiring Lives Award from the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia. Three other people from around the province also won the award. A powerful video was made of a round table discussion involving the winners as they spoke about their experiences with their mental illness.

This revealing video may be viewed at **You Tube** by entering "Inspiring Lives Award 2012."

Eating Disorders: A Mental Health Issue

According to a 2002 survey, 1.5% of Canadian women aged 15 – 24 years have an eating disorder.

-Government of Canada. (2006).

While eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia are not classed as mental illnesses, they are caused by emotional/mental issues that require medical treatment. Almost fifty percent of those with eating disorders suffer from depression. If the mental health issues are not treated, those with eating disorders may not fully recover.

Anorexia involves not eating or eating very little. Bulimia is characterized by eating and then expelling food from the body, either by vomiting or using laxatives. Overeating involves continually eating more than the body requires. Not only can these diseases be very dangerous to one's physical health but they can also be detrimental to one's mental health. In order for the brain to function properly, it needs essential nutrients like fats, amino acids and protein. When there's a lack of these nutrients, the brain along with the rest of the body will suffer.

Having a healthy attitude toward weight and food is also important. In a study conducted with college women, ninety-one percent of them dieted, even though of the eighty-three percent who do it for weight-loss reasons, forty-four percent had normal weights. Of equal concern is that thirty-five percent do it for pathological reasons, with twenty to twenty-five percent developing eating disorders as a result.



Though women make up the majority of those with eating disorders, more and more men are developing an eating disorder. Ten to fifteen percent of people with eating disorders are male. Often men are overlooked even though these diseases pose the same risks for them as females. This may be because eating disorders are considered “a woman's disease” so they may not seek treatment. In fact only ten percent of men get treatment.

Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness and therefore, prompt diagnosis and treatment is essential. However, they can be complex and eating disorder treatment centers may offer the best solution. For more information on eating disorders and how to get help, go to: <http://www.anad.org>.

A Mental Health Perspective Mission Statement:

The purpose of this newsletter is to bring faith, hope and courage to members of the local mental health community of Kings County, Nova Scotia, as well as others who are involved with a mental, emotional or psychological condition.

Donations to support this newsletter and other important programs and services can be made To CMHA Kings County, Suite 3, 11 Opportunity Lane, Coldbrook, P.O. Box 894, Kentville, NS, B4N 4H8. (Cheque or money order will be accepted).

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