



NEWS RELEASE

Eastern Ontario organizations partner to simplify access to mental health, substance use and addictions services

AccessMHA matches individuals with the right services based on their needs

OTTAWA, February 24, 2021 - One of the biggest challenges for people seeking mental health, substance use, and/or addictions services is knowing where to turn for help.

To answer that challenge, people with lived and living expertise, healthcare organizations, and community service providers have teamed up to create [AccessMHA](https://www.accessmha.ca), a new single point of entry into eastern Ontario's system of care for mental health, substance use and addictions.

Here's how it works: Anyone who is 16 years of age or older can fill out a form at [AccessMHA.ca](https://www.accessmha.ca) and book a time for a confidential conversation with a mental health and addictions professional. That professional will work with the client to assess their needs and goals, then connect them to the service that is the best fit for them from a network of partner organizations across the community. Services might include individual and group counselling, psychotherapy, psychiatric consultation, substance treatment programs, or peer support.

AccessMHA has been created by the Partners for Regional Coordinated Access for Mental Health and Addictions (RCA), which includes people with lived and living experience as well as many community and health organizations throughout eastern Ontario (view the list of partners at: www.accessmha.ca/about).

Gord Garner, vice president of strategic partnerships at Community Addictions Peer Support Association (CAPSA) and co-chair of the RCA Client and Family Advisory Committee, describes the typical pathway to care as an "incredibly complex, undiscoverable pathway for many people."

"The people who are suffering, or concerned for a loved one, want to know more than anything else that they're not mistaken about their hopes for help," says Garner, who is also a member of the RCA oversight committee. "When they can't access help, or they're told they are at the wrong place, or that they don't qualify for this help, it may take them decades to come back seeking help again."

AccessMHA seeks to address this issue by providing simple, equitable access to all people and their supporters who need mental health and/or substance use/addiction services across the region.

“It takes a lot of courage to reach out for help. We need to make sure that when people are reaching out, that they know where to go and that they're confident there is help out there. We can help get them connected to that and give them hope,” says Dr. Kim Corace, vice-president of innovation and transformation at The Royal.

AccessMHA was designed so that people can get the help they need, when they need it.

“With so many organizations offering various mental health and addiction services, it can be very confusing for those in need to know where to turn or who to call,” says Mireille Delorme, director of Mental Health Services of Renfrew County – a program administered by the Pembroke Regional Hospital.

“AccessMHA will help take away the guesswork for those seeking care for themselves, or others. Mental Health Services of Renfrew County is excited to become a part of AccessMHA as we work together with other providers to promote all mental health and addiction services and help those in need find the right fit for them in a timely and compassionate manner.”

Although the primary mission of AccessMHA is to draw a clear path for individuals who are reaching out for help, AccessMHA can also help to shorten wait times and wait lists for mental health, substance use and addictions services in general. Rather than waiting on multiple lists in the search for a service that fits their needs, individuals can work with AccessMHA to find the right service.

“Montfort Renaissance, an accredited community-based organization, is proud to expand its Service Access to Recovery (SAR) by joining AccessMHA,” says Steve Vachon, director of Service Access to Recovery and mental health programs at Montfort Renaissance. “With AccessMHA, Montfort Renaissance will build on the coordinated access to addictions treatment currently offered by the SAR in both official languages to facilitate access to both addiction and mental health support for its clientele and others across the region.”

AccessMHA is intended for anyone over 16 who lives in: Ottawa; Pembroke; Cornwall; Hawkesbury, and surrounding areas including Lanark, Leeds and Grenville; Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry; Prescott-Russell; and Renfrew. Family doctors or other health care providers can also submit a referral on a client's behalf.

“Figuring out the ‘right service for the right person at the right time’ has been a long-standing challenge in our complex mental health and addiction system,” says Geneviève Arturi, Director – Mental Health & Addiction Regional Centre, Hawkesbury and District general Hospital (HGH). “HGH is proud and thrilled to join AccessMHA which will harmonize how individuals access the

services their specific needs. It is quite exciting to be working with the regional partners on this initiative which is a crucial step towards working as an integrated system.”

For more information, go to [AccessMHA.ca](https://www.accessmha.ca).

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