

Mental Health Services Of Renfrew County Continues To Help Those In Need During COVID-19 Pandemic

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2020

PEMBROKE - The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on the day-to-day lives of everyone in our community. For many, fear of the coronavirus has triggered stress and anxiety. The requirement to self-isolate and keep physical distance makes it even harder than usual to ask for and receive emotional support — particularly for those living with mental illness.

Mental Health Services of Renfrew County (MHSRC), a program of the Pembroke Regional Hospital, is an essential service within the local healthcare system. It offers a broad range of publicly available health services supporting mental wellness and recovery for Renfrew County residents ages 16 years and older, who are living with mental illness and addictions.

“Now more than ever, it’s crucial that we support those in our community who are struggling with mental health and addiction issues,” said MHSRC Director Mireille Delorme.

While measures are in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as a reduction in in-person visits and group programs, a full complement of specialized mental health professionals are still available, working hard and using alternative methods to meet the needs of those living with serious mental illness or experiencing acute distress.

Mental health and addictions case workers are meeting with new and existing clients, via teleconference where possible, to provide educational and self-help resources, including those specific to COVID-19. Caseworkers are still providing in-person support on a case-by-case basis for essential needs.

Members of the Assertive Community Treatment and Mobile Crisis teams are providing in-person care to the more vulnerable client population and, as required, injections and medications can be administered without the client needing to leave their home.

According to intake caseworker Lani Graham, who is fielding incoming calls, those in need of support are promptly assessed and continue to be connected to relevant services. “Our staff guide each client towards the programs and resources designed to support their journey to recovery,” Ms. Graham said.

Another way to access mental health and addictions support in the region is through the Crisis Line (1-866-996-0991).

According to Crisis Line Executive Director, Charles Laframboise, “Since we started tracking calls related to the COVID-19 virus on March 8th, calls related to the virus make up nearly 50 per cent of our daily call volume, and calls in general have increased 32 per cent over the same period a year ago.”

As a result, visitors to the website and those who call the toll-free phone line are receiving a message asking for extra patience during this extraordinary period.

“We’ve been with you through thick and thin, and during these unsettling times with COVID-19, we’re continuing that support — 24/7,” reads the Crisis Line prompt. “When the world feels chaotic and uncertain, we’ll always be here for you.”

MHSRC also recommends use of the following self-care and information resources for mental health and addiction issues elevated by the COVID-19 crisis:

- COVID-19 Online Self-Assessment Tool (www.covid-19.ontario.ca)
- Renfrew County Virtual Triage and Assessment Centre (www.rcvtac.ca)
- Renfrew County District Health Unit (www.rcdhu.com)
- www.bouncebackontario.ca

“While events like COVID-19 can trigger a crisis for those already in our system, many of us are more anxious than usual during this time of upheaval,” Ms. Delorme said. “We acknowledge that, and we are here to help. Wellness is within reach.”

Anyone seeking mental health and addictions support and information is asked to call Mental Health Services of Renfrew County or the Crisis Line, or visit their websites:

- 1-800-991-7711, extension 8006 or local (613) 732-8770, extension 8006
- Crisis Line: 1-866-966-0991
- www.Crisisline.ca
- www.pembrokeregionalhospital.ca

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

**Carolyn Levesque, Public Affairs and Communications Coordinator
Pembroke Regional Hospital
(613) 732-3675, extension 6165 / carolyn.levesque@prh.email**