



Virtual mental health and addiction walk-in counselling clinic launches in Renfrew County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2021 – Renfrew County residents often face a long wait time when they need to access mental health and addiction counselling. In response, the Renfrew County Collaborative E-Walk-In Counselling Clinic (WICC) has launched to provide children, youth, adults, and families with free, same-day access to single-session therapy by video or phone.

The WICC is the expansion of a service model started in Ottawa under the leadership of Jewish Family Services and funded by the Ontario government through the Champlain Local Health Integration Network. The Renfrew County expansion has been partially funded by the Renfrew County United Way and is a regional collaboration bringing together multiple Renfrew County healthcare providers and agencies that are sharing mental health and addictions resources to better support the immediate needs of residents.

“Collectively, we are helping to address the mental health and addiction service gap for Renfrew County adults, kids, teens and families by offering more immediate, convenient single-session counselling that provides many individuals with the initial support and coping strategies they need,” said Karen Simpson, WICC co-lead and Executive Director, Arnprior & District Family Health Team. “The timeliness of the WICC’s counselling access is a major benefit for our communities.”

Although the WICC is focused on single-session therapy, individuals may return to access the services at any time, even while they are on a wait list for other mental health and addiction services.

“We have found that walk-in clinics have created a simple, very accessible resource for anyone needing to connect to a mental health or addiction clinician to provide support, guidance and/or navigation to appropriate service systems,” explained Greg Lubimiv, WICC co-lead and Executive Director, The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families. “With COVID and the closure of most in-person walk-in clinics, the creation of a virtual walk-in is a timely and necessary solution. Not only are we now able to reopen walk-in virtually, but we are doing so within a

large partnership, led by Jewish Family Services, so that we can offer not only child and youth mental health services, but adult and addiction services through the same access point.”

As part of the gradual launch, the WICC is currently open every Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Individuals who need same-day support, can call 1-844-441-0981. The receptionist will go through a series of questions to help match the person with the right counsellor and book a session time for that day by video or phone (based on the client’s preference). To ensure immediate access to mental health and addiction services outside of the WICC’s operating hours, clients can access Counselling Connect online at www.counsellingconnect.org.

“I feel this will be seen as a valuable service that is being offered,” said Sandi Wright, Supervisor of Mental Health, Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation. “It will be a great way to reach people without a wait and get immediate service. We are looking forward to working with the entire mainstream community—it has been one of our goals to be seen as a collective within the community.”

The WICC recognizes, welcomes and accepts the diversity of our clients and their families with respect to race, national or ethnic background, place of origin, religion, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, mental or physical disability, or language.

“The Renfrew County Collaborative E-Walk-In Counselling Clinic is an exciting initiative for our area,” said Lise Laframboise, Executive Director, Pathways Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services. “Residents suffering from addiction issues and/or their family members now have an opportunity to connect with an addiction counsellor for immediate support to address their concerns in the moment.”

Kim MacLeod, Service Director, Addictions Treatment Service, added: “The ability for people to link with this new service, for example, from the safety of their homes is key; especially for clients living with addiction who are reaching out to someone for what might be the first time to get help.”

The WICC partners include: Arnprior & District Family Health Team, Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, Deep River and District Hospital, Madawaska Valley Family Health Team, Mental Health Services of Renfrew County (Pembroke Regional Hospital), Pathways Alcohol and Drug Treatment Services, Petawawa Centennial Family Health Centre, The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families, West Champlain Family Health Team, White Water Bromley Community Health Centre, and the Renfrew Victoria Hospital.

Residents can access the Renfrew Collaborative E-Walk-In Counselling Clinic every Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. by calling 1-844-441-0981.

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