

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS PROGRAM

monthly newsletter



A special holiday message from Nova Scotia Health Mental Health and Addictions Program Leadership Team

As the holiday season is upon us, it seems only natural to reflect on what has been both a very challenging, yet rewarding year.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, we have continued to provide services and supports to ensure all Nova Scotians receive the care they need, when, and where they need it. Early on in the pandemic, we were able to adapt quickly through the use of increased virtual care options to support our clients across the province. We have seen this year bring many successes and milestones for the program and for mental health and addictions in Nova Scotia. The establishment of the Government of Nova Scotia Office of Addictions and Mental Health brings increased awareness, support and dedication to improve programs, access and health care outcomes for people living with mental health and substance use issues. As a program, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of our website, the launch of new e-Mental Health tools including Breaking Free Online and Togetherall, and we continue to progress on our commitment to service model improvements with the Intake and Provincial Crisis Line evaluations, along with the launch of many new projects and initiatives.

We could not be more excited about what is in store for next year, and the opportunity it brings to work with our Mental Health and Addictions Program staff, physicians, partners and our communities to make it happen. We hope this holiday season you enjoy time with family, friends, loved ones and enjoy each other's company.

We can't say enough about the incredible Mental Health and Addictions Program team we work with everyday. We are truly humbled and beyond appreciative of your relentless commitment to providing compassionate, quality care and support to clients, and the dedication you have shown throughout the course of this year.

From our families to yours, we wish our Mental Health and Addictions staff and physicians, our Nova Scotia Health colleagues and our partners, stakeholders, and volunteers a joyous holiday season.

Mental Health and Addictions Program Leadership Team

Sam Hodder

Dr. Andrew Harris

Robert Graham

Rachel Boehm

Janah Fair

Debbie Purvis

Dr. Dave Martell

Dr. Scott Theriault

Dr. Gerald Gray

Dana Pulsifer

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Dr. Faisal Rahman

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Maureen Brennan, IWK

Dr. Alexa Bagnell, IWK

Dr. Hugh Maguire

Bethany McCormick

Denise Fraser

Shane Grant

Rose Landry

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Nova Scotia Health to offer free online substance use recovery program to adults in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program and Health Innovation Hub are piloting Breaking Free Online, an online substance use recovery support program.



Breaking Free Online will be free and available for all Nova Scotians to sign up between Dec. 2, 2021 and March 31, 2022. It will continue to be available to those who register for the pilot program before March 31 for a period of up to two years from the date of their account creation.

“Those living with addiction need access to appropriate and effective services to support their recovery,” said Brian Comer, Minister of Addictions and Mental Health. “With the expansion of this online program, Nova Scotians across the province will now have an additional, interactive tool they can log into any time and from anywhere that will support them in their efforts to refrain from substance use or recover from an addiction.”

Nova Scotians 18 years and older are able to access Breaking Free Online by visiting www.breakingfreeonline.ca, entering their e-mail address and using the service code **NSBFO21**. **Please note although Nova Scotia is not listed on the landing page, Nova Scotians are still able to register and use the program for free.*

Breaking Free Online will also be featured on the [MHAhelpNS website](#) “Online Tools” tab along with many other free programs, apps, and resources promoting mental health and addictions recovery.

“We know many Nova Scotians are working to manage their substance use better and that there is no one size fits all solution,” said Sam Hodder, senior director of Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addiction Program. “Breaking Free offers Nova Scotians a private, 24/7 accessible, digital option for working on their recovery. We will evaluate its impact and grow what works best to support the health and well-being of our communities.”

This online substance use recovery support program is just one of the many supports and services available through Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program.



The Breaking Free Online program is:

- Designed to help adults achieve and maintain recovery from dependence on alcohol and over 70 substances – including opioids, stimulants, and prescribed medications.
- Focused on practical, self-guided courses, positive coping skills, and behaviour change techniques to support individuals with early intervention, prevention, or ongoing recovery.
- Engaging, interactive, and highly personalized.
- Backed by considerable research evidence demonstrating positive impact.
- Designed to be used independently, or in conjunction with support and care through a health care provider.
- Accessible 24/7 on a desktop or tablet while the companion app can be used on a smart phone.

Our People in Profile: Mental Health and Addictions Program welcomes Quality Leaders

As Quality Leaders within the Central Zone of the Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHAP), Laura Ankcorn, Mara Miljanovic, and Lianne Nixon understand how important continuous quality improvement is for effective health care delivery, and for improving health care outcomes for all clients within the program.

There are Quality Leads in each Zone of MHAP who focus on helping make a difference for patients through improving safety, effectiveness, equity and helping to make the overall health care experience as people-centered as possible.

People-centered care (PCC) is an approach that guides all aspects of planning, delivering, and evaluating services. It means working collaboratively with clients and families to provide care that is respectful, compassionate, and culturally appropriate.

The Quality Leader role within the MHAP focuses on the program's safety, quality, and accreditation requirements to achieve the best outcomes in health care programming and service delivery, while always striving for continuous improvement. With three Quality Leaders in the Central Zone of MHAP, each can focus on different areas that help support patient care.

Ankcorn has worked in Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHAP) for over 15 years, with 11 in a Quality Lead role. Ankcorn, who is the provincial Quality Lead, works out of the Marshall Building at the Nova Scotia Hospital and believes "being able to work across the full continuum of care from community outpatient services to inpatient acute care, rehabilitation, crisis services, and forensics is an incredible opportunity."

Miljanovic is new to the role and based at the East Coast Forensic Hospital. She is eager to help make an impact on patient care. When she moved to Nova Scotia, Miljanovic started in IM/IT, and now has settled in Mental Health and Addictions as a Quality Leader. She sees Quality Improvement as a perfect blend of program planning, process and policy development and performance analysis and improvement, and is excited to start this new chapter of her career.



Left to right: Central Zone Quality Leaders Laura Ankcorn, Lianne Nixon, and Mara Miljanovic

"Quality improvement is often an area and role you don't hear much about, but it is such an important component of health care delivery," said Miljanovic. "It is a process that always aims to systematically improve the ways health care is delivered across all programs."

Nixon, who is also new to the role, and based at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility supports MHAP Provincial Correctional Health Services. "I am in a unique role in where I work closely with the Provincial Correctional Facilities across Nova Scotia within a Mental Health and Addictions role," describes Nixon. Having worked in a social work role at the East Coast Forensic Hospital for the previous 12 years, Nixon is excited about this new experience. "Accreditation Canada developed the first set of standards specific to Provincial Correctional Health Services in 2019 and it is exciting to be a part of this process as Nova Scotia will be one of the first provinces in Canada to be fully accredited under these new standards."

"Quality aims to improve not only healthcare delivery but also patient and staff satisfaction, safety, and security as well as effectiveness and efficiency," explained Miljanovic. "There is a true focus on patient-centered dimensions of care which I think is very important."

Our Quality Leads will be supporting us in preparing for Accreditation in October 2022. To learn more about Quality Improvement in your area, connect with a member of your site's Quality Improvement and Safety Team.

Roots of Hope: A community suicide prevention project

Roots of Hope is a multi-site, community-led project, overseen by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, that aims to reduce the impacts of suicide within communities across Canada. The project builds upon unique community expertise to implement suicide prevention interventions. It will lead to the development of an evidence base, including best practices and suicide prevention guidelines and tools, to support the scale up and implementation of a “made-in-Canada” model across the country. Roots of Hope is currently being piloted in Colchester County in Northern Zone.



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program is collaborating with the community through a Coalition (Advisory Group) and several Subject Matter Expert Community Groups. They will create and implement a comprehensive two to three year suicide prevention action plan that includes at least one activity under each of the five pillars of the Roots of Hope model shown below.



Specialized supports

help for those contemplating, surviving a suicide attempt or experiencing loss from suicide.



Training and networks

build capacity to support others who are managing suicidal ideations.



Public awareness campaigns

locally-driven campaigns to promote mental health awareness and collaboration with the media.



Means safety

restrict access to the methods or places where a high number of suicides occur.



Research

to increase understanding of community's role in preventing suicide.

The Department of Health and Wellness awarded funding in fall 2020 with deliverables expected by March 2025. This work is in alignment with the Nova Scotia Suicide Prevention Risk and Reduction (SPRR) Framework and hopes to serve as a model to demonstrate how Tier 2 supports for suicide prevention can be identified and resourced in Nova Scotia.

For more information on Roots of Hope contact: Seana Jewer, Community Engagement Leader,
Seana.Jewer@nshealth.ca, 902-897-8381

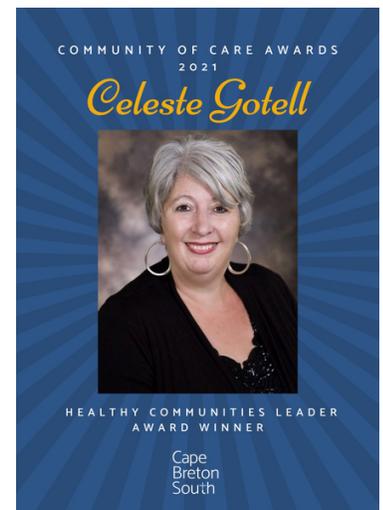
New report examines mental health impacts of COVID-19 on Nova Scotians

We would like to share a **new report** that was published this week called, [Different Boats in a Stormy Sea: The mental health impacts of COVID-19 on Nova Scotians](#). It provides a snapshot of the impacts of COVID-19 on mental health of Nova Scotians, and identifies key trends in the use of mental health services in Nova Scotia before and since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The study was led by the Maritime Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR) Support Unit, in collaboration with Nova Scotia Government Office of Addictions and Mental Health, and Research Nova Scotia, which facilitated access to the survey data collected by Mental Research Canada (MHRC) and Pollara Strategic Insights. This research provides a blueprint for working with health system stakeholders including Patient Partners to use available data to understand the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of Nova Scotians and monitor how these changes impact the health system. This study can help to identify areas of need and guide planning and resource allocation as we navigate our ongoing response to the pandemic and look towards recovery.



Eastern Zone Health Promoter recognized for dedicated community work

We would like to congratulate Celeste Gotell, from the Health Promotion team, on being selected as the recipient of the Healthy Community Leader award. This is an award given to a healthcare professional who demonstrates outstanding community leadership in caring for the broader region of Cape Breton South, often by making the health and safety of the community a number one priority through education and promotion. We commend Celeste on her commitment, effort, and passion for the difference she is making in communities. She focuses her work on seniors mental health, diversity and inclusion, housing, and the list continues. She is a well known figure in the Strait Richmond area and is heavily involved with multiple committees and coalitions. Thank you Celeste! To learn more about Cape Breton South Health Recruiting, [click here](#).



South Shore Sexual Health recognized for sexual health innovation and leadership

[South Shore Sexual Health](#) took first place for their [TransFORMATION Closet](#), which offers free/pay-what-you-can gender-affirming gear to anyone who needs it.

“We are SUPER excited to share our big news with you all, now that it's Facebook Official! We won a national award for our Transformation Closet! Not only does it come with a very welcome cash prize, but it is also great to have this kind of recognition from our peers. We just hope that more programs like this can grow across the country where access to gender-affirming gear is minimal or non-existent. Our Transformation Closet full of gender-affirming items can be seen at our office, or by request to your school or organization! (We have a travelling kit!)”



PRINT ME!

Mental Wellness

HOLIDAY ACTIVITY CHECK LIST

OUTDOOR WAYS

The fresh air and a clear mind can make outdoor activities so much fun! In fact, being outside can even alleviate stress and anxiety.

- ICE SKATING
- GO FOR A HIKE
- GO SLEDDING
- MAKE A SNOWMAN
- VISIT A TREE FARM



TASTY WAYS

The holidays aren't the same without flavor. As a result, you should add some of your own to the season.

- BAKE COOKIES
- GIVE THE GIFT OF MEALS
- PREPARE FREEZER MEALS
- MAKE A PIZZA WREATH
- MAKE A HOT CHOCOLATE BAR
- TRY NEW CULTURAL FOODS



FUN WAYS

Next you can rekindle your love of the holidays by -

- HAVING A SNOWBALL FIGHT
- WATCH AN OUTDOOR MOVIE
- DECORATE COOKIES
- GIVE OUT CANDY-GRAMS
- MAKE TIME FOR FRIENDS



SIMPLE WAYS

With all the fuss and stress that the holidays bring sometimes the best way to enjoy the holidays alcohol free is to go back to basics. For example, you can -

- TAKE A BUBBLE BATH
- ENJOY A HOLIDAY MOVIE MARATHON
- MAKE POPCORN GARLAND
- LOOK AT THE LIGHTS
- CREATE YOUR OWN CARDS

HELP OTHERS

Without a doubt a great way to enjoy the holidays is by helping those who are less fortunate.

- DONATE TO A FOOD BANK
- VOLUNTEER
- DONATE TOYS
- RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS
- BEFRIEND A NEIGHBOUR



CRAFTY WAYS

Keep your mind and hands busy by crafting during this season. With this in mind, why don't you -

- MAKE A WREATH
- CREATE A HOLIDAY CRAFT
- MAKE ORNAMENTS
- LEARN TO KNIT/CROCHET



PRACTICAL WAYS

Being prepared can go a long way to enjoying the holidays without alcohol. As a result, plan to -

- MAKE A BUDGET
- SHOP LOCAL
- DECORATE SIMPLY
- DON'T OVER COMMIT
- MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF



ENJOY MORE, DO LESS

The minimalist movement can spread to the holidays. Minimalism is shown to decrease anxiety. Therefore, you should -

- DONATE UNWANTED ITEMS
- TAKE TIME TO RELAX
- CLEAR OUT YOUR INBOX
- TAKE A SOCIAL MEDIA BREAK
- GIVE THE GIFT OF TIME
- OFFER TO HELP FAMILY

A FEW MORE WAYS ...

If you're still not convinced...you can -

- JAM OUT TO CHRISTMAS MUSIC
- WEAR AN UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER OR SANTA HAT IN PUBLIC
- CATCH UP ON SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE HOLIDAY SKITS
- READ CLASSIC HOLIDAY STORIES
- MAKE A GINGERBREAD HOUSE



Education, training and webinars

[Healthcare Excellence Canada \(Three-part virtual workshop happening in January, February, and March 2022\)](#)

Opening ourselves: An introduction to anti-oppression practices and frameworks (part 1)

January 13, 2022, 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Speakers include Ed Connors, PhD, C.Psych. & Stephanie Nixon, BA, BHSc, MSc, PhD

[RHO 2022 Symposium: LGBT2SQ Health in Focus: Virtual Gathering, February 25, 2022](#)

Tickets are \$10. This online symposium is a learning and sharing forum for anyone interested in LGBT2SQ health. Unique in Canada and renowned for the diversity and scope of its programming, Rainbow Health Ontario's events draw and connect professionals and community members from diverse perspectives, including health and social service providers, researchers, and policy makers.

[Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Community Conversation January 12 and 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.](#) The

Community Conversation is a safe space for hope providers to think, discuss, and explore how we create spaces where people feel safe, supported, a sense of belonging, and purpose within our communities. The session is designed to reduce stigma and build capacity within groups and organizations to better support those at risk of suicide. The knowledge gathered during this event will help inform one another as well as the Nova Scotia Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Framework. Any questions can be directed to communityconversation2022@gmail.com.

Reminder: Rescheduling and Cancelling Appointments

During these times of uncertainty, we understand things come up.

We hope that you can continue to provide us with notice of cancellations whenever possible. If you provide us with enough notice to cancel, we're able to offer your space to someone who has been waiting, and who could truly benefit from mental health care at this time.

Please remember our Crisis Line is available 24/7 by calling 1-888-429-8167. Our Mental Health and Addictions Intake Service is also available by calling 1-855-922-1122.

Also, our website is a great way to find out information, learn about our services, and gain access to our online tools. Visit: www.MHAhelpNS.ca

Thank you for your understanding, and stay well.



Want to be featured or have an update to share?

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