

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS PROGRAM

monthly newsletter



New Mental Health Acute Day Hospital to open in Halifax

A new mental health hospital will offer day treatments for those in the Halifax area requiring intensive mental health supports.

The province's first mental health acute day hospital is scheduled to open in April. The hospital, which will be at the Abbie J. Lane Memorial Building at the QEII Health Sciences Centre, will provide an additional point of care for local residents living with mental illness.

Individuals in need of intensive treatment can attend the day hospital during the day and return home in the evening.

Those attending the hospital will be supported by an interdisciplinary team of mental health specialists, including nursing staff and social workers.

The team will provide individual psychiatric treatments and therapeutic group programs. The hospital will operate seven days a week. It will have an initial capacity of up to 10 people a day and is expected to expand.

The day hospital will help to improve access to care for people experiencing intense psychiatric symptoms but who do not require 24-hour inpatient support. It will also help decrease the number of overnight hospital admissions, easing existing pressures on inpatient psychiatric units and within the broader health care system, without compromising patient care or clinical outcomes for people living with mental illness.

Admissions will come through community mental health clinics and emergency departments. People discharged from inpatient psychiatric care may also be referred to the day hospital for follow-up care.



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"The new Mental Health Day Hospital will help close the gap between outpatient care and full inpatient hospital admission. It will help provide people living with mental illness access to the supports they need on their healing journey."

- Dr. Sanjana Sridharan, Head of Acute Consultation and Emergency Psychiatry, Mental Health and Addictions Program, Nova Scotia Health

Pharmacy Appreciation Month

March is **Pharmacy Appreciation Month (PAM)** in Canada, the annual national campaign that shines a spotlight on all things pharmacy and celebrates the extraordinary efforts and contributions of pharmacy professionals.

Dr. Laura Miller is Nova Scotia Health's provincial Bloom Program coordinator. The Bloom Program aims to improve the health and well-being of people living with mental illness and addictions by connecting them directly with pharmacists who can offer patient-centred medication therapy management, help patients more easily navigate the health care system including community supports, offer educational resources with in-house pharmacy libraries, and provide friendly faces and helpful advice as soon as you walk through the door – both free of charge and without any sort of waitlist.

The Bloom Program's goal is to work with community pharmacies to become "hubs for mental health and addictions services in the community," said Miller. When the pilot project started in 2014, there were 23 pharmacies across the province offering the Bloom Program, with up to 20 patients enrolled in the program per pharmacy.

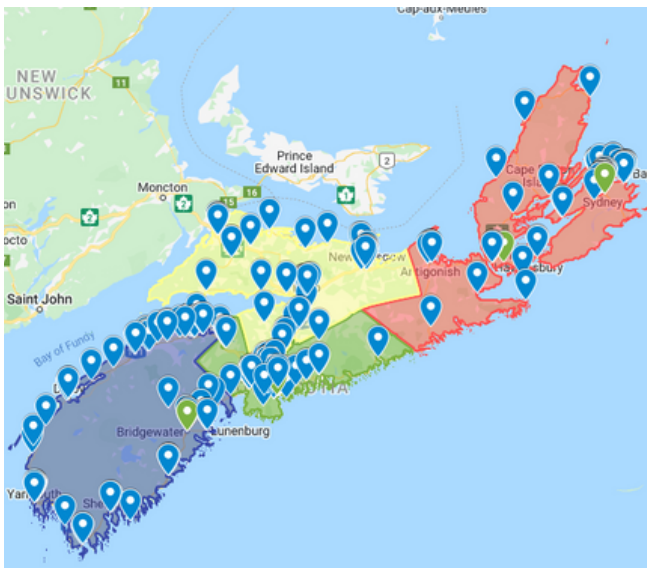
Following a study published in 2017 on the pilot project, the program proved to be quite successful. "We were then able to solidify the program and move it forward into the framework for mental health and addictions," explained Miller.

Currently, there are 50 pharmacies in Nova Scotia offering the program, thanks to the dedication of community pharmacists taking on roles of Bloom Program site leads. But there is still the capacity for many more pharmacies, pharmacists and patients to get on board with Bloom. For more information please visit the [Bloom Program website](#).



Dr. Laura Miller, provincial Bloom Program coordinator

Take Home Naloxone Program



In continuation of acknowledging pharmacy involvement within mental health and addictions programs, the Take Home Naloxone Program expanded into Nova Scotian community pharmacies in 2017.

The Take Home Naloxone Program provides opioid overdose prevention/naloxone administration training and free take home naloxone kits to Nova Scotians at risk of an opioid overdose and those who are most likely to witness and respond to an opioid overdose.

The aim is to prevent opioid overdoses and related death from occurring in Nova Scotian communities. Family, friends who may witness an overdose can also get a kit. Pharmacists are certified to offer training and instructions to anyone who comes into their pharmacy for a Take Home Naloxone kit.

We are grateful that nearly 300 pharmacies take part in the Take Home Naloxone Program. [Click here](#) to locate participating pharmacies. [Click here](#) to learn more about the Take Home Naloxone Program.

Health promoter's vaping commentary published in the Canadian Journal of Public Health

Mental Health and Addictions health promoters Laura Kennedy and Rose Wall's vaping commentary written with the support of Rowan Hart, a Dalhousie University health promotion intern, and Mohammad Al-Hamdani from Smoke-Free Nova Scotia, was published on March 23, 2022, in the Canadian Journal of Public Health.



"We started writing this piece last spring, around the one-year anniversary mark of the vaping flavour ban (April 1, 2020)," explained Kennedy. "We wanted to write a piece that showcased Nova Scotia's leadership to protect the wellbeing of youth. Our goal was to highlight the advocacy process and the story behind the end result (policy change)," she said.

The team was inspired by Nova Scotia's leadership as Nova Scotia was the first province in Canada to implement a vaping flavour ban. Research has shown that flavours are a key reason why youth begin to vape, with the majority of youth reporting they would quit if flavours were removed.

Nova Scotia has a long history of tobacco control leadership, such as banning menthol cigarettes, with the province now taking a similar approach when it comes to vaping. "We saw NGOs (non-government organizations) step up, leading research and speaking at law amendments," said Kennedy. "We also saw governments step up and refuse to meet with tobacco companies, prioritizing health, and we wanted to capture the role of our health promotion team."

The team worked closely to support NGOs and their advocacy and research, and hope others can learn from the health promotion process. To read the published vaping commentary click [here](#).

Substance Use Disorder Support Education (SUSDE)



The Mental Health and Addictions' Central Zone Health Promotion team is hosting their second Substance Use Disorder Support Education (SUSDE) in-person session on **April 27**. This full-day session will be centered on transformational conversations about substance use in Nova Scotia, substance use disorders, addiction and supporting our community.

SUSDE is designed to build the community's capacities in creating supportive environments for Nova Scotians who may happen to be experiencing a substance use disorder. The session is open to all Nova Scotia Health staff and physicians, as well as external partners.

For more information, as seats are limited, please reach out to health promoter and session facilitator Mary Myketyn-Driscoll at Mary.Myketyn-Driscoll@nshealth.ca or by visiting the [registration page](#) using the password *SUSDE*.

A day in the life of a Health Promoter: Liane Khoury

Liane Khoury (she/her) began her role as a health promoter at Nova Scotia Health in November 2019.

“I’m very thankful to be able to be creative with my role and my scope,” said Khoury. “My focus has been on 2SLGBTQIA+ and newcomer/immigrant communities as I am a part of both of those. I just found a way to combine both passions into a future project.”

When asked about her favourite part of the role Khoury explained the ability to continuously learn from others who have been in the field, but also from the ones who are just starting. “I love seeing things from different perspectives and assessing situations before I dive into the work,” said Khoury who expressed her love of working from an anti-oppressive lens as it lets her understand the barriers we have placed on a lot of the population.

Recently, Khoury led the facilitation and planning of the **Winter Pride Workshops** with the help of David Devine, clinical psychologist, and Garry Dart, prideHealth coordinator.

Together, the three were connected to Eating Disorders Nova Scotia, where they learned of the meaningful 2SLGBTQIA+ engagement and the programs Eating Disorders Nova Scotia offers that are specific for trans and non-binary clients.

“Eating Disorders Nova Scotia was looking for other ways to engage the queer community,” said Khoury. “I thought that their programming needed to be highlighted and suggested creating a Lunch and Learn for Nova Scotia Health/IWK staff which then evolved into a week-long learning session(s) with various themes each day,” she explained.

All the workshops were facilitated through Zoom to ensure that other zones could attend and adhere to current public health protocols. Khoury’s role was to look for funding and to ensure things were running well throughout the sessions. “I connected with Janelle Aucoin, one of our health communication specialists, to the core planning team to help us with poster, sessions advertisement and all the tech that needed to be done,” added Khoury. “We included two of our lovely health promotion student interns to help plan and be our chat monitors, and also collaborated with my health promotion colleague, Rose Walls, in helping me create evaluations for each session,” she described.

When asked about how she builds relationships within the community as a health promoter Khoury said that the 2SLGBTQIA+ community is quite small, and many do know one another. “I am part of the NSH/IWK Pride network (along with Garry and David), so a few other members took part in some of the sessions,” explained Khoury.

She added that as health promoters, they understand that community priorities and opportunities evolve. There are three stages where a community's capacity changes – the Central Zone health promotion team considers these as: Red (no go), Yellow (maybe), and Green (let’s do it). “We need to be aware of what stage the community we’re engaging is in; so, we either step back and reevaluate, keep listening or deliver content,” described Khoury. “Our role is to be present, maintain relationships and be invited back.”



In addition to community connections, health promoters want to have a positive impact on others. “Mostly because of the pandemic changing everything for many of us, I was feeling as if I wasn’t having an impact on others,” said Khoury. “But then I am reminded that I have been impactful. I was just reading the comments from the evaluation surveys that we created for the workshops, and I can tell that the participants who attended were interested and wanted to implement all that they have learned into their practice.”

Reflecting on the **Winter Pride Workshops** further Khoury added that with the great turnout for each session she hopes that this will become an annual winter pride week full of great engagement, and not just workshops. “It excites me because the 2SGLTBQIA+ community is not talked about in health care and it shows that we need to be talking more about gender-affirming care, elder health care, or even the queer community that live in rural Nova Scotia. The potential is endless. I can’t wait for next year’s planning” said Khoury.



Looking to connect with Liane?

E-mail: liane.khoury@nshealth.ca

Expanded access to e-Mental Health supports for Nova Scotians 16 and up

Nova Scotia Health’s Mental Health and Addictions Program in partnership with the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, the Department of Advanced Education, and IWK Health has expanded access to Togetherall, an online mental health tool, free to all Nova Scotians aged 16 and up.

Togetherall was previously available to young people aged 16 to 29 through a one-year partnership with RBC Future Launch, the QEII Foundation, and Nova Scotia Health, as well as to, post-secondary students and apprenticeship learners aged 30 and up, through an agreement with the Department of Advanced Education.

Nova Scotians 16 years and older are able to access Togetherall by visiting the website [here](#) and entering their postal code, or by using a student email address. The service is now available in French.

Togetherall is a safe and anonymous online peer-to-peer community that is moderated by registered mental health practitioners, and it is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Togetherall members can share their thoughts and experiences by writing community posts, supporting others’ stories, creating art or taking well-being courses and resources. It is an evidence-based service that has proven to help members take control of their mental health, get support and feel better. The platform has recently expanded to include community groups in relation to student life, health care workers, parents and caregivers, military community, work-life balance and health and lifestyle tips, among others.

Togetherall is featured on the MHAhelpNS website under the **Online Tools** tab along with many other free programs, apps, and resources promoting mental health and addictions recovery.



Government investment to Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia

The province has provided a one-time investment of \$3 million to the Mental Health Foundation of Nova Scotia to support mental health and addictions projects across the province.

Eligible organizations that provide mental health and addictions services will be able to apply for grants through the foundation. The application process is expected to be ready this summer.



Priority will be given to organizations that serve Indigenous communities, members of 2SLGBTIQ+ communities, African Nova Scotians, newcomers and people with disabilities. Organizations that help Nova Scotians who face insecure housing, poverty, violence, trauma and social isolation are also eligible to apply for grants.

Redesigning QEII Psychiatric Emergency Care Suites



The QEII Foundation is currently raising funds to help transform the QEII’s Psychiatric Emergency Care Suites at the Halifax Infirmary.

Until March 31, the Owens family is doubling all donations to the redesign project, up to \$25,000. Read more in the [Chronicle Herald article](#), interviewing Dr. Vincent Agyapong, Central Zone chief of psychiatry, and head of psychiatry at Dalhousie University and donor, Natalie Owens, about the incredible impact QEII Foundation supporters will help make possible.

Pictured: IWK’s Garron Centre inpatient rooms serve as one inspiration and example of what the redesigned QEII Psychiatric Emergency Care Suites could look like.

“Supporting this project will be one of the best investments you could ever make,” says Dr. Agyapong. “There’s no better investment than the one you make in other people, in particular, providing access to quality mental health services.” To learn more about the redesign or to donate, please visit [QEII’s Psychiatric Emergency Care Suites](#) or call **902-334-1546**.

The Aberdeen Health Foundation Annual General Meeting

The Aberdeen Health Foundation held its virtual Annual General Meeting (AGM) on **March 24**, which included a virtual grand opening of the **Recovery Support Centre** at Aberdeen Hospital. The centre expands on the withdrawal management services that had been based in the Town of Pictou, with space to offer both inpatient and day programs.

People can make an appointment for supports and services at the Recovery Support Centre by calling the **Mental Health and Addictions Intake Service** at **1-855-922-1122**, Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Referrals will also come through family physicians, emergency departments and community mental health and addiction clinics.

The AGM included a video marking the opening we invite you to view by [clicking here](#).

Education, training and webinar opportunities

Public Lecture: Suicide & Suicidal Behaviours - Effective suicide prevention strategies and treatment planning decisions need to recognize that suicidal behaviour varies widely, and that treatment incorporates a combination of approaches. Please join Dr. Gustavo Turecki on **May 5** from 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. in the **Paul O'Reagan Hall** at the **Halifax Central Library** where he will provide an overview of suicide and suicidal behaviours, focusing on risk factors and briefly discussing intervention strategies based on his research and findings. The lecture will not be live streamed, but will be videotaped for those who are not able to attend. For more information please contact the Halifax Central Library at asklib@halifax.ca.

Promoting Positive Behaviours in Children - Starting on **May 5, Mental Health and Addictions Program** will be offering an eight-week course via Zoom for parents/caregivers of children diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (ADD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). This course will be open to anyone in the **Western Zone** who is looking for education, support and assistance for children between the ages of 3 and 12. To register for this course please contact: sarah.swinamer@nshealth.ca.

Ramp Up Reconciliation At Work: Workshop - This one-hour interactive workshop offered by *Sea Change CoLab* will explore four areas for engaging and taking action. On **April 7** facilitators will be discussing: reflecting on the past, creating awareness of our identities/biases, translating intention into action and being an ally for a more inclusive future. For more information or to register for the workshop please [click here](#).

Black Experiences in Cannabis and Mental Health: Virtual Panel Discussion - Join the Mental Health Commission of Canada on **April 6** for a moderated discussion on the gap in cannabis and mental health research, policy, and education and its cultural impact on Black communities in Canada. Building on their previous Dialogue Series, panelists will share their thoughts on the report's key findings and recommendations. [Click here](#) to register.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health - There are several previous webinar recordings on the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) website surrounding harm reduction, approaches to addressing substance misuse and trauma, indigenizing harm reduction and Indigenous knowledge and culture being important foundations to harm reduction. All recordings can be found [here](#).



Want to be featured or have an update to share?

e-mail: Deborah.Purvis@nshealth.ca

Senior Communications Advisor, Mental Health and Addictions Program

Mental Wellness Tip: Stay Active

Staying active is as good for the brain as it is for the body!

Regular exercise or activity (even during the winter months) can have a major impact on your mental and emotional health, relieve stress, improve memory, and help you sleep better.

