

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS PROGRAM

monthly newsletter



Stepping together for digital mental health and addictions services

In February 2020, Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHAP) in partnership with the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and the Stepped Care 2.0© team began a two year collaboration.

Stepped Care is an approach to delivering mental health and addictions services that helps people access the right care at the right time, from low-intensity informational resources to intensive in-person services. With many of those in need either not seeking or facing challenges in accessing mental health, substance use, or gambling supports. MHAP has recognized that strengthening service options within a Stepped Care approach could benefit people in the province.

MHCC has long championed Stepped Care as a systematic way to strengthen mental health care across the country, providing pathways to the most effective, least intensive support that meets people's needs. That potential was shown in the Newfoundland and Labrador Demonstration Project that saw Stepped Care 2.0 contribute to a reduction in wait times by 68 per cent.

Building on the Newfoundland and Labrador experience, the current project brought MHAP together with the MHCC to adapt the Stepped Care 2.0 model to the Nova Scotia context. With an emphasis on e-mental health (eMH) technologies, MHAP designed its eMH Stepped Care 2.0 program in keeping with MHAP's [Direction 2025](#) program plan and the objectives of the [ACCESS Atlantic](#) collaboration.

This report describes the two year eMH Stepped Care project, results to date and lessons learned.

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Highlighting Mental Health and Addictions' nurses during National Nurses Week

The National Nursing Week annual celebrations take place from the Monday to the Sunday of the same week as Florence Nightingale's birthday, May 12.

The theme this year is **#WeAnswerTheCall** and was developed by the Canadian Nurses Association to showcase the many roles that nurses play in a patient's health-care journey. The pandemic brought to light the courage and commitment that nurses work under every day and showed the important role that nurses play in the community.

During May 9 to 13, Nova Scotia Health, and Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program highlighted some of the many nurses who work in mental health and addictions services. We asked them why they answered the call to become nurses and what inspires them.



Jeff Walker

Registered Nurse, Community Mental Health Nurse, Mental Health and Addictions, Dawson Centre, Bridgewater

"The call to nursing came when I began caring for a family member. I thought this was something I could also do for others. So, dared to change careers and started down a path that has been one of my best life decisions yet."



Sally Carvy

Registered Nurse, Community Mental Health Nurse, Mental Health Clinic Bedford/Sackville

"My nursing inspiration comes from many places but first and foremost, it comes from my parents, who have always demonstrated a selfless commitment to helping others. They instilled strong values of giving and caring for others when in need. In turn, this created a fundamental desire and passion to enter the nursing profession."



Marissa Fong

Registered Nurse, Transition Hall, Mount Hope Building

"I became a nurse because I wanted to help others. My parents are my biggest inspiration and role models and have always been by my side throughout my nursing journey."



Lee Mailman

Registered Nurse, Health Service Manager, Transition Hall, Mount Hope Building, Dartmouth

"Just showing up daily for our clients and knowing that because you were there you made a difference in their lives. I have experienced this many times over in my career."



Laura Barnes

Registered Nurse, Community Mental Health Nurse, West Hants

"The clients I provide care to inspire me to be a nurse. Witnessing on a daily basis the strength and resilience they have in the face of mental illness and stigma is truly amazing. I enjoy learning from them and the wisdom they share with me."



Jenn Mason

Northern Zone Interprofessional Practice & Learning /MHAP, Clinical Nurse Educator

"The amazing nurse colleagues/mentors I have had over the past 17 years inspire me. These nurses put the patient first, taught me what it is to work hard, advocate for better patient care, and helped me become the nurse I am today. When I am faced with new or tough situations, I often think "what would so-and-so do in this situation?" I can only hope that some of the nurses I support through my work as a Clinical Nurse Educator will be able to think the same of me someday."



Linda Hiltz

Licensed Practical Nurse at the East Coast Forensic Hospital and a third-year RN student in the St. FX bridging program

"I answered the call to become a nurse because it fulfilled my desire to help a marginalized population; it is a privilege to care for people at their most vulnerable and incredibly rewarding to watch them succeed. Our patients' resiliency inspires me professionally and personally to be courageous in the face of adversity."



Melanie Kelly

Registered Nurse, Intake Clinician, Western Zone

"I answered the call to become a nurse because I have a desire to help people when they need it most. It also offers me a career where I feel like I'm making a difference for people. It's also a career that can offer a lot of diversity in where you work and specialties. There is a lot of room to grow and develop your career!"



Rachel Miller

Licensed Practical Nurse, Community Transition Program

"I answered the call to become a nurse to work more directly with people. I am inspired by seeing clients make progress and overcome barriers to achieve their goals."



Shelley Stephens

Registered Nurse, Community Mental Health Nurse and owner of foot care business 'Caring for Your Soles'

"When I look back at where the inspiration continues to come from it's the clients, patients, families and colleagues. I remember my first placement, my first patient, my first mistake, my feelings of sadness, joy, respect, empathy, and most of all my calling to simply care for people."



Mary Ella Cleveland

Registered Nurse, Mental Health and Addictions, Transition Hall

"Being empathetic and caring towards your patients, is the key for me and being compassionate about the delivery of care you are giving. You may never have any idea of a patient suffering until you start to listen."



Christine MacMaster

Registered Nurse, Dartmouth Community Mental Health and Addictions, Parkton Wellness Center

"I became a nurse with the intention of working within the specialty of Psychiatric Mental Health. I am privileged to have built my career creating spaces of safety where people have entrusted me with the knowledge of their lived realities and journeys with mental illness and wellness."



Alexandra Marcia

Registered Nurse, Manager, Mental Health and Addictions

"I answered the call to become a nurse as I discovered a career path that allowed me to combine the helping profession with many specialized fields of studies; uniquely tailoring my experience as a nurse."



Jeff Laslo Toth

Registered Nurse, Intake Clinician and Psychotherapist, Operational Stress Injury Clinic

"I'm left inspired by the resilience of the human spirit. The will and strength of clients committed to their own recovery, despite tremendous adversity, remain a continual source of inspiration for me as a nurse."

Mental Health First Aid: training opportunity

The Mental Health Commission of Canada in coordination with Mental Health First Aid Canada (MHFA) is revamping facilitator training. During this period, the Mental Health Commission of Canada will continue to offer the MHFA Basic Facilitator training until December 2022 in parallel with their new Facilitator Certification Training (FCT).

The FCT will only be available virtually at this time.

For information about the Basic Facilitator training, [click here](#).



Day in the life of a health promoter: Celeste Gotell

One reason why Celeste Gotell was drawn to health promotion was the ability to work directly and build capacity with community partners, championing them to effect change.

Before joining the Mental Health and Addictions Health Promotion team three years ago, Gotell worked in health promotion for Public Health and spent one year working as the Eastern Zone Manager for Community Health Boards. Prior to joining Nova Scotia Health, she spent 25 years working with several nonprofit organizations and government agencies that addressed a wide range of issues involving mental health, family support, gender violence and gambling.

For Gotell, being a health promoter is all about working with communities to find ways to improve overall health outcomes.

“By using an upstream approach to impact change, focus on the pillars of health promotion that build capacity, and creating collaborative partnerships, as health promoters we can make a lasting important change in communities,” she explained.



Reflecting on her work, Gotell highlighted the origin of SPARK conference, a hybrid learning event that she was involved in planning for in the fall of 2019, to target social isolation and ultimately spark a connection. Originally planned as an in-person event for June 2020, it became necessary to pivot due to COVID-19 and was offered in September 2020 with over 150 participants both online via Zoom and gathered in small watch parties in several locations.

“The idea for SPARK provided an opportunity to work with multiple partners and focus on something that was a shared concern for our local community health boards, our local health promotion colleagues with public health and our community partner, the Antigonish Regional Library,” said Gotell.

Gotell added that with COVID-19, came a new understanding of the extent of how social isolation affects communities, specifically rural populations. “The relationship between social isolation and mental health is something we need to focus on in the coming years,” she said.

Gotell supported the planning committee by providing ongoing liaison with the facilitator, Gerard Murphy, as well as the keynote speakers joining from the United Kingdom and Ontario. In addition to this, Gotell helped develop the learning goals and outcomes for the day while focusing on what we can do better to support communities.

“The intent of our SPARK event was to pave the way for organizations to look at doing something smaller scale in the community,” explained Gotell. “It is our hope that more conversations will come from this to address social isolation that people are experiencing because of COVID-19 and how that has impacted their mental health outcomes,” she described.

Seeing the impact of what they do as health promoters in supporting communities is her favourite part and what motivates her in her role, but for Gotell, her impact was highlighted this past year when she was selected as the recipient of the Healthy Community Leader Award.

This is an award given to a health care 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. “To be honoured for my work in Richmond County was especially meaningful as I have roots there and strong family ties. The fact that people recognized my leadership in the community was very humbling,” said Gotell.

Individuals with and without bipolar disorder needed for a study on brain function

If you are, or know, an individual diagnosed with bipolar disorder or someone without a history of mental illness, you or they may be eligible to participate in a research study investigating how auditory hallucinations in bipolar disorder affect brain functioning.

Each participant will attend one two-hour visit where they will be asked to complete questionnaires and computer-based tasks.

Participants will be compensated for their time.

If you or someone you know is interesting in participating, please contact the lab of Dr. Derek Fisher at **902-457-6441** or bipolar.study@msvu.ca



Health Promotion hosts cannabis research sharing session with Dr. Kara Thompson

The Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Health Promotion team invites you to learn about the role sex plays in cannabis use.

Join us as we host a sharing session led by Dr. Kara Thompson from the SHEA Lab at St. Francis Xavier University.

Dr. Thompson will be highlighting findings from her recent study ***An examination of the sex-specific psychophysiological markers of risk for physical and mental health problems across modes of cannabis use.***



Health Promoter Mary Myketyń-Driscoll, from Nova Scotia Health's Mental Health and Addictions Program will begin the session with an overview of trends in cannabis sales in Nova Scotia.

[Click here](#) to register.

Mental Wellness Tip

Gardening is a great way to improve your mental wellness by promoting mindfulness and meditation.

No outdoor space? Create an indoor garden! House plants have so many health benefits for our home and mind.



Education, training and webinar opportunities

Join the **Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC)** from May 29 - June 4, 2022, for **National AccessAbility Week** and the theme *Inclusive from the start*. Building on this work, MHCC has created **A Practical Toolkit to Help Employers Build an Inclusive Workforce** to increase accessibility and inclusiveness and address the needs of workers living with mental illness. Follow the conversation online with the hashtags **#InclusiveFromTheStart** and **#NAAW2022**.

Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) & YW/YMCA - Intercultural Competency Training is a free three-hour training program for employers and teams involved in the Atlantic Immigration Program with the goal of ensuring organizations are creating welcoming and culturally inclusive workplaces for newcomers. **Note: ISANS offers the required course for employers within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and the YMCA offers courses for everyone outside of HRM in other parts of the province.** YMCA also asks to fill out a pre-training questionnaire [here](#). Please note that a meeting password may be required to enter the Zoom meeting. When prompted for a meeting password, please enter the following: YMCA. Click the date by zone link below to register/join.

ISANS (Central Zone Only)

- [June 8, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.](#)
- [June 15, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.](#)
- [July 13, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.](#)
- [July 21, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.](#)
- [July 27, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.](#)
- [August 4, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.](#)

YMCA- (Eastern, Northern & Western Zones)

- [June 7, from 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.](#)
- [June 9, from 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.](#)
- [June 14, from 1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.](#)

The **Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division (CMHA NS)** has announced **Thrive Learning Centre for Mental Wellness and Well-Being**. It is described as an innovative, safe, and welcoming learning space that provides free courses designed to support mental health, boost resilience and promote connection. THRIVE courses are developed by subject experts and mental health professionals, working together with people who have their own experience in personal recovery. [Click here](#) for more information on the spring sessions.

- Art of Friendship | June 10 & 17
- Mental Health Resources | June 6
- Supporting Someone with a Mental Illness | June 21
- Managing your Inner Critic | June 9
- Self Care Starter-Pack | June 28

The **Canadian Mental Health Association Nova Scotia Division (CMHA NS)** will be hosting its **Annual General Meeting** on Wednesday, June 22, 2022. CMHA welcomes two guest speakers, Dr. Sam Hickox, Chief Officer of the Office of Addictions and Mental Health and Margaret Eaton, National Chief Executive Officer, CMHA. For those unable to attend the meeting in person they will be Livestreaming the AGM on the **CMHA NS Facebook** starting at 7:00 p.m.



Want to be featured or have an update to share?

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