

CMHA's College of Health and Wellbeing gets boost from Province



Mental health supports for individuals in York Region and South Simcoe have received a boost from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, one which will help individuals in need receive important information on mental health, recovery, and overall wellbeing.

The Foundation's support has helped the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe (CMHA YRSS) expand its CMHA College of Health and Well-Being program, which offers access to free courses, webinars, workshops and events to improve mental health and recovery.

The grant helped the organization hire a mental health educator in 2022 to expand the course curriculum and train staff on virtual and in-person mental health education programming.

"All courses at the CMHA College of Health and Well-Being are designed to inspire hope, support learning, and provide new opportunities for growth and connection," said Rebecca Shields, CEO of CMHA-YRSS. "We're incredibly grateful for OTF's generous grant that's enabling our CMHA College to bolster mental health and recovery support to marginalized clients in our community."

Added Cathy Cowan, Senior Director of Communications for the CMHA-YRSS, "One of the really exciting pieces that it enables us to do is we're creating a beautiful learning management system that is more convenient and easy for clients and students to access and understand the information on the courses that are available to them. It's going to make the whole learning process more enjoyable and easier as well."

"The [college] is a school and really the focus of the workshops and training that are available through the college to help people develop skills and confidence to manage their mental health and manage their recovery. It's everything from financial literacy to relationship-building, to just housing rentals, to even things like changing your mindset and conflict resolution - a really good array of practical skills as well as mental health skills and strategies to help people as they basically build their confidence and really learn some of those skills so they can be more autonomous and build healthier, stronger lives."

The CMHA-YRSS is also using a portion of the grant funding to have their materials translated into many different languages to make the organization as inclusive as possible.

They already offer programs and services in several languages, as well as have translators, and some key pages on their website are available in up to seven languages. Having those options available to clients, they say, is "essential to be able to serve all the different communities who live in our area."

?The grant has really helped us to expand,? said Cowan. ?We want to continue with that momentum. As we [add] more courses to the curriculum, we have a great support network of peer support specialists who offer the program, are creating the curriculum for the program ? it's looking at what are the needs in the community? What do our clients and other people in the community need to help them on their mental health journey? Pinpointing more courses to offer and developing the curriculum for them, creating the materials, whether it is the online learning management system as well as the translation of material to make it more accessible to people, I think our goal for the coming year is now that we're building the foundation, now we can start really focusing on having more people participate in the college.

?The beauty of the program is people can do as much or as little as they want. I think it's a great opportunity to try one course. Take one course for a few weeks. See if you like it. One of the great courses is about changing your mindset and I think that's something everyone can benefit from. Take the sessions, learn something about yourself, and then decide if there are other areas of your life where you would like to focus on. It's a building block, so you can take it in as big or as little pieces as you would like.?For more, visit www.cmhacollege.ca.

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