

MOVING FORWARD

*Mentally healthy people in
a healthy society.*

A communiqué of the CMHA Erie-St. Clair Integration Project

Mental health partners join forces

The Essex, Kent and Lambton County branches of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) have been working together for the past three years to examine different levels of integration.

In September, 2007 the three branches signed a formal agreement for collaboration.

The partners have now moved into the next phase of collaboration which includes the examination of a full merger. The three boards of the branches have approved a full scale cost/benefit analysis with the potential for integration at every level of work including the possibility of merger of the three branches.

This communiqué is intended to keep you informed about things that are happening within the project and to answer any questions that arise. It is important to keep communication open during this exciting time of change.

Goals of the Integration Project of the Erie–St. Clair CMHAs

There are a number of significant goals and objectives guiding the CMHA Erie–St. Clair Integration Project. The team has hired consultant Glenn Thompson to help facilitate these objectives and will be working with Glenn over the next few months to create a template for collaboration.

The work or scope of the project focuses on a Cost–Benefit Study along with the development of a proposed implementation

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Mental health partners join forces	1
Goals of the Project	1
Questions and Answers	2
Contacts	4



**CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION**
**ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE**

We look forward to communicating the next phases of this project with you. Please visit www.cmha-wecb.on.ca under “About Us” for further background or past communication pieces about the collaboration of the three branches.

If you have any questions or comments about this newsletter please direct them to Patti Lauzon, Director of Advancement at CMHA–WECB, plauzon@cmha-wecb.on.ca or 519–255–9940 x 224.

strategy for various administrative and governance structures. The items to be studied include:

Back office function integration

Service delivery integration

Executive level integration

Governance level integration

Please see *Goals of the Project* on page 2

Goals of the Project...continued

Complete merger of the three entities.

A phased approach to moving through the options to a full merger.

The study will also determine if benefits are likely to be achieved and the cost of implementing them regarding service and programs.

The study will examine service levels and ensure that access to services are retained at current levels and, where possible, improved in terms of:

1. Ease of access
2. Equitability of access
3. Simplification of navigation of the system to improve access at various

stages of service delivery.

Additional points for consideration in the scope of the project include continuity of service expansion, improved effectiveness and efficiency by reducing duplication in areas of finance, human resources, information technology and program management. Other areas to be reviewed are data systems and data compatibility through common systems, increased impact with policy makers/funders due to increased critical mass, reduced governance to improve timeliness and effectiveness of decision making and greater potential for cross -region perspective of consumer, family/caregiver and community needs.



Questions and Answers about the Integration Project

Following are some frequently asked questions about the CMHA Erie-St. Clair Integration Project.

Q: How does the proposal look at local

partnerships?

A: The work that is being undertaken between CMHAs in the Erie-St. Clair LHIN will continue to build on local partnerships. All three

"Services will continue to be provided on the basis of identified general and unique service needs across the region."



branches will continue to participate in local integration opportunities that will improve continuity of care for people with mental illness.

Q: Are the hospitals or agencies that have community mental health services involved in your initiative?

A: CMHAs account for more than half of the community mental health services in the Erie–St. Clair LHIN area. Building on this strength, we have chosen to focus our efforts on building on the existing CMHA affinity. We will invite participation of other providers once we have clarified the relationship between the three branches.

Q: What are you doing this now? Why not wait until later?

A: CMHA has always championed and pioneered the development and implementation of community mental health services, and we continue to do so now and into the future.

Q: Are we ahead of the rest of the province in looking at integration opportunities?

A: The healthcare systems across the province are all evolving at their own pace. Conditions in our area are unique and the three branches are taking this opportunity to be proactive in identifying potential opportunities rather than being reactive.

Q: Have the branches decided to amalgamate?

A: The three CMHA branches are reviewing a number of integration opportunities including merger.

Q: What will this mean for my job?

A: The three CMHAs are committed to ensuring the best service for its clients and families/caregivers. The partners will continue to provide programs and services within their respective budgets.

Q: Is this a way for the creation of a single CMHA

organization?

A: CMHA is a strong, important and viable service provider in each of the three counties. We have entered this process as equal partners and we are committed to ensuring each community maintains or increases its level of service. This may possibly result in one CMHA.



Q: Is this a voluntary process?

A: Yes. The three branches have entered this project voluntarily.

Q: Will this impact on the services I receive from CMHA?

A: Continuity of care and responsiveness continue to be priorities for the three CMHAs.

Q: Why did you hire a consultant for this project?

A: We hired a consultant to facilitate this process. We are equally sharing the work and the ownership of this project.

Q: Will this impact current collective agreements?

A: Existing labour agreements and employment practices will guide decision-making that impacts on human resources in accordance with relevant legislation. We are committed to implement any changes with least disruption to the employees while maintaining a focus on clients, families and friends.

Q: How will this protect local leadership, community engagement, and local delivery of services?

A: The branches recognize the uniqueness of each community, including the variations in programs and services available from other providers in the community. Variations of need also exist. Services will continue to be provided on the basis of identified general and unique service needs across the region.

Q: If you are looking at integration, does this mean equity across the three counties?

A: The range and amount of community support services available will be provided in so far as possible consistently across the region. Equity will be sought to ensure that no matter where someone lives in the tri-county they can expect relatively the same range and quality of services. We recognize the unique differences and needs that will need to be considered during this process.

Q: How will families find out about this initiative?

A: A communication plan is being developed that will include the best ways in which to communicate the progress of the project. It is important for us to communicate with all affected groups especially clients and their families.

Q: How will this benefit or help a loved one or me?

A: Services will continue to be provided in the local communities by local providers. The principal focus of the project is on the mental health of individuals, their families, friends and communities in our region.

Q: Will this improve services?

A: Creating efficiencies and critical mass will maximize direct services in local communities. Sharing resources will help to eliminate duplication and efforts.

Q: Since the three communities are so different, how will you respond to individual needs?

A: The nature of community support is that the services need to be tailored to the individual's

unique needs. How services are delivered may vary by community depending on the network of services available and unique characteristics of the specific populations.

Q: How are consumers and families involved?

A: The boards for each branch are involved and include consumer and family representatives. As the project progresses, family and consumers will be involved in a consultation process when and if the branches pursue areas for integration.

Key Contacts for the Project

If you have any questions or comments about the project please direct them to one of the branch Chief Executive Officers. They are:

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