

All Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Addictions Meeting Minutes

Date: June 5, 2024

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Attendees:

Committee Members: Tom Osborne, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Joedy Wall, Jim McKenna, Lela Evans

Officials: John McGrath, Gillian Sweeney, Niki Legge, Maggie O'Toole, Stephanie Wold

1. Minutes approved from May 28, 2024.
2. Presentation – Brad Glynn and Sarah White provided an overview of Lifewise, formerly known as CHANNEL, a non-profit organization that offers peer support services (by individuals with lived/living experience) throughout the province. Discussion included the importance of peer support, harm reduction practices and education in the prevention and treatment of mental health and addictions issues. Inpatient treatments options, based on abstinence and harm reduction, as well as involuntary treatment and the **Mental Health Care and Treatment Act**, were also discussed.

Biggest improvements since Towards Recovery included: the increased Mental Health First Aid and Suicide Intervention training provided to communities, groups, and individuals; success of a mental health navigator; and the number of transfers from 811 to LifeWise Warm Line for first responders. The stepped care model was identified as a strength.

Biggest improvements needed included: incorporation and expansion of harm reduction practices; reduced wait times to access treatment from stabilization/abstinence; the stepped model with tracking; and engagement with clinicians and educators to include and promote socio-emotional learning opportunities in the education curriculum in schools. Also identified was a need for mental health literacy to help reduce the stigmatization, and the acknowledgement of the impact of alcohol on relationships.

3. Presentation – Dr. Francoise Guigne, Jen Crowe, Doug Pawson provided a brief overview of services offered through Choices for Youth. The focus of their presentation was trends and recommendations from the Harm Reduction Summit held in November 2023. Greater details are provided in the presentation.

Biggest improvements since Towards Recovery included: the Opioid Dependence Hubs and harm reduction hubs; increased availability of naloxone kits in communities and schools; and investments and policy decisions that address the social determinants of health, recommended by the Health Accord.

Biggest improvements identified included: the need for naloxone kits to be more available, specifically in pharmacies at no cost with no questions asked; more safe consumption sites;

wrap around and mobile outreach/clinical services more readily available in community spaces beginning with housing; engaging with people with lived experience; and further investment in peer support programs and services.

Discussion also included barriers to accessing services which included booking appointments, such as bloodwork with no phone or Internet; a need for more specialized training (addictions, trauma informed) for frontline health professionals with more incentives and pay. Acknowledgement of the uniqueness of Atlantic Region and communication of this to Federal government for multi-year funding opportunities was also identified.

4. Action Items

- Secretariat to add to the list of suggested stakeholders to present, to include women's groups who serve clients with issues related to mental health and addictions, as well as domestic violence, and continued Committee engagement with Dr. Francoise Guigne;
- Secretariat to begin to identify common themes from what has been heard from stakeholders so far; and
- Secretariat to explore options for stakeholder engagement in Labrador.